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Everybody's

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bert Richard Wetjen, William Almon Wolff, Arthur B. Ree
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The Ingersoll you give now will be ticking Christmas Greetings every day throughout the year.

Your dealer can show you Ingersolls to fit every purse and purpose. Sizes for men, women, boys and girls. Radiolite dials that tell time in the dark. Jeweled models in nickel and gold-filled cases.

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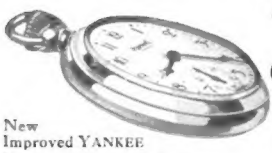

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More men and boys use the Ingersoll Yankee than any other watch. Sturdy, reliable, good looking it carries a sound guarantee.

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Can Success Like This Be An Accident?

"THE fellows who used to work with me while I was plugging along at $25 a week are convinced that I either had a 'pull' or just 'fell into a good thing'—that my $9,000 a year position is a sheer accident.

"When I told them I had found an easy way to earn big money as a salesman, they laughed at me and called it a 'harebrained idea.' They told me 'salesmen are born, not made.' But I decided to see my harebrained idea 'through.' I was sick of slaving for a pittance.

"I started studying the secrets of master salesmanship as taught by the National Salesmen's Training Association—and almost before I knew it I had confidence to tackle my first selling position. And why not? I had mastered the very secrets of selling used by the most successful salesmen.

"My earnings during the past month were $750. I now have better than a $9,000 a year position—with lots more room to grow. I can state positively that my sudden success was not an accident. It came because I knew how to sell scientifically. And how simple it is to sell when you know how. My regret is that I did not know these secrets ten years ago."—Ellis Sumner Cook, Manufacturers Agent, 20 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

Why Not Make More Money?

If you want to get out of the wage-earning class, if you want to make good money without loss of time—then do as Mr. Cook and thousands of others have done.

The secrets of salesmanship which Mr. Cook learned are available to you. There are certain ways to approach prospects, to stimulate interest, to overcome objections, and to close sales. Every move in selling is governed by certain rules. Once you know these success is yours.

Success Like This Yours

Adam Horneber, Bay City, Mich., writes: "I have increased my earning power 500% since I secured your training in the Science of Selling."

Lewis A. Tinnes, Minneapolis, Minn., writes: "When I finished your training, I left my job at $160 a month and took a job as salesman. The first month I made over $600 and I expect to go higher yet."

F. K. Kramer, Pine Bluff, Ark., writes: "Since studying the N. S. T. A. Course I have increased my earning capacity from $2,200 to over $6,000 a year."

N. D. Miller, 1705 S. Clark Street, Chicago, says: "I place the credit for my success where it rightfully belongs. I owe my present position wholly to the N. S. T. A. In July, 1919, I studied your selling secrets and in September you secured me the position which I now hold. I am earning in excess of $100 a week."

EMPLOYERS

are invited to write to the Employment Dept. of the N. S. T. A. We can put you in touch with just the men you need. No charge for this service to you or our members. Employers are also cordially invited to request details about the N. S. T. A. Group Plan of instruction for entire sales forces. Synopsis and charts sent without obligation.

Bear in mind that these stories of real success—the kind that is awaiting you in this field of unlimited money-making opportunities—are but a few of thousands on file. You will find scores of them in our literature.

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No matter what you may now think, it is only a thought. Get the facts! See for yourself how you can easily duplicate any of these stories of success. NOW and no other time is the minute to mail the coupon below. Our big free book, "Modern Salesmanship," will be mailed promptly. And there's no obligation.

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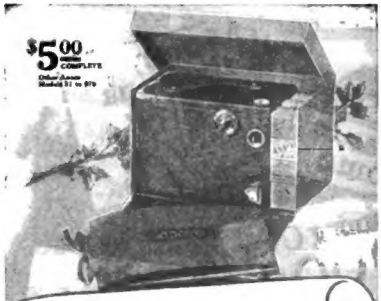

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Be sure to see the Take-a-Picture-Package before making up your Christmas list. It will solve the old "what-shall-I-give" question for practically everybody. If your dealer hasn't it send us his name and address.

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EVERYBODY'S
December, 1923

Published monthly by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $2.50 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Aug. 16, 1905, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entered as second-class matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada.

Volume XLIX
Number 6

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If your rheumatism comes on again this year—

How can a medicine that is applied on the outside of the skin reach a pain deep down in the joints and muscles? This treatment acts by stimulating the brain to send new blood to the affected area

DON'T suffer unnecessary pain. Get relief at once. It may be splendidly courageous to just "grin and bear it"—but it is a frightful waste of the very vital resources you need to help you get rid of the cause of the pain.

Your doctor will tell you that pain should always be relieved—just as quickly and as completely as possible.

And this relief is easily at hand. However deep-seated, however hard to reach the pain may seem to you, it can be stopped—quickly and permanently.

Nearly fifty years ago a remedy for muscular pain was given to the world that has brought relief to so many sufferers that today you will find it in one home out of every three.

This remedy is Sloan's Liniment—probably the foremost household remedy in America, used all over the world and recommended by doctors everywhere.

No matter where the pain is, no matter how deep down in joints and muscles, *it can be reached* if the natural curative powers *inside* the body are only aroused.

When you use Sloan's, it stimulates the nerves on the skin. They arouse the brain, which in turn causes the blood vessels to expand throughout the painful area, *under* the place where the liniment has been applied. Rich new blood rushes in.

This new blood coming, freshly purified, from heart and lungs, with all its marvelous germ-destroying, upbuilding powers brings to sick, pain-ridden tissues just what they need to heal them.

This is the scientifically correct way to relieve pain. It doesn't just deaden the nerves. It gives your own natural bodily defenses the aid they need to drive out the cause of pain.

Don't wait until you are in actual need. Get a bottle of Sloan's this very day, and have it on hand—35c at all druggists. Just apply it—no rubbing is necessary. It will not stain. Immediately you will feel a gentle warmth—then a pleasant tingling of the skin—then, almost magically, relief from pain. There is no burning, no blistering, only quick, lasting relief.

SLOAN'S Liniment — *Kills pain*

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DO YOU WANT TO EARN MORE MONEY?

DO you need more money than you are earning to-day? Have you obligations that you want to pay off? Do you want a position that will yield a good immediate income and has a future as large as you can make it?

If you do, you are just the kind of man we want to sell Better Brushes in the great district east of the Mississippi, north of Tennessee. If you put your shoulder to the wheel and give a reasonable amount of time and attention to the work, there is practically no limit to how far you can advance with this company.

Better Brush Salesmen *make no deliveries.* Every day is free for positive, profitable effort. Better Brush Salesmen *are paid regularly.*

Write For This Booklet

An opportunity like this may never come a...n. Don't let it slip by. At least cut out and mail the coupon printed below and find out what there is in this proposition for you. You will be especially interested in the booklet, *"The Way to Sure Success,"* which tells how our sales have increased from $2800 per month to $80,000 a month in three years, and how you can share in this prosperity.

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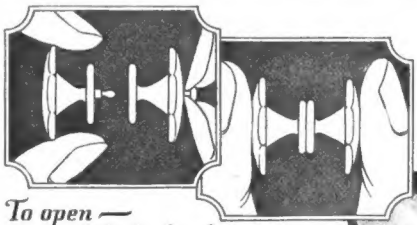

Closes like this and
Stays locked

To open — lift the knob

An Up-to-date Gift

HE'S hoping for a pair of those popular new Sta-Lokt Links. The kind that press together, lock and *stay locked* until you lift the knob. Then they open easily—instantly. Sta-Lokt is the *perfected* separable cuff link. There are many two-piece links, but only one Sta-Lokt. Be sure and ask for it by name. From $1.50 to $7.00 a pair. Your jeweler will be glad to show them to you. Write for folders of Sta-Lokt designs, including the new Cuff-Line shape.

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A Thousand Miles of Wonderful Living

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All have found that life in California is better for them, as it is better for you.

A Better Opportunity

Californians have about twice as much money in the bank as the average American. Their farms in the Great Valley and elsewhere produce about twice the average cash yield; their fruit trees return twice the average in cash value; their cows give more milk.

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The individualized Corona

a wonderful idea in Christmas gifts

THE gift of a Corona will mean more this year than ever before. You can now select a Corona Keyboard which exactly suits the vocation of the one who is to receive it.

There is scarcely anyone who does not need a Corona nowadays. In business, in school, in the home, Corona is fast replacing the pen.

It's a satisfying gift to give, or to receive—wonderfully durable, light, compact, yet big in the work it does.

Corona has a 10-inch carriage, a two-color, automatically reversing ribbon, back spacer, margin release, platen release, paper release, self-spacing carriage return—everything you would expect in a heavy machine—yet it costs only half as much.

Place your order today for one or more Coronas for Christmas. Your dealer will deliver the machines, specially packed in beautiful Christmas cartons, on whatever date you specify. If your phone book doesn't list "Corona," mail the coupon for the address of the nearest store.

CORONA TYPEWRITER CO., INC.
120 MAIN ST., GROTON, N.Y.

Use this list to select your Christmas Corona

If the vocation of the person to whom you will give Corona is not listed here, mail the coupon below.

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Architects	XC-Special
Authors	Standard Portable No. 20
Bankers	" " "
Business Men	" " "
Chemists	XC-Chemical
Children	No. 20
Doctors	Medical No. 19
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Engineers	XC-Engineering
Farmers	No. 20
Housewives	" " "
Insurance Men	" " "
Lawyers	" " "
Linguists	XC-Polyglot or any one of 50 languages
Ministers	No. 20
Playwrights	" " "
Realtors	" " "
Retailers	XC-A
Salesmen	XC-A or Special
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Scenario Writers	" " "
Stenographers	XC-A
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Note: All "XC" keyboards have 90 characters, with "dead keys" where required.

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Ninety-Character Models $5 extra

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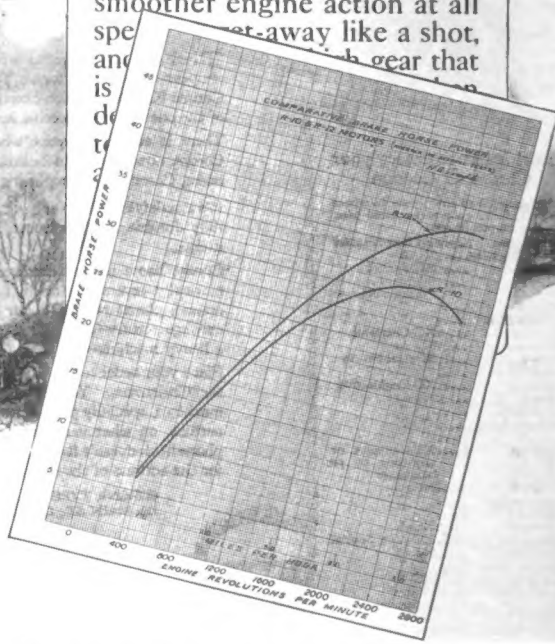
The New Hupmobile

MUCH greater power accounts for the magnificently improved performance of the new Hupmobile.

Not only greater speed, but smoother engine action at all spe[illegible]-away like a shot, an[illegible] gear that is [illegible] de[illegible] t[illegible]



The power curve chart reproduced above represents a very close approach to the engineering ideal in the development of power by an automobile engine.

You will note that the upper curve—which records not one test, but the average of a number of tests with the new Hupmobile—shows a steady increase in power up to a speed of 50 miles per hour.

Moreover, this maximum power is sustained, as the curve shows, over a range from about 2300 engine revolutions per minute to about 2600 revolutions per minute.

The upper curve means a more complete elimination of vibration and other physical forces which tend to interfere with full and free power development.

A heavier counter balanced crankshaft, larger bearings, lighter pistons and connecting rods—these are some of the engineering refinements which make it possible for the new Hupmobile to develop its greater power so easily and so smoothly.

Never before have we built such an engine. Never before has any Hupmobile—fine as they all have been—given its owners such splendid results in all the performance-abilities which make or mar the owner's satisfaction.

Hupp Motor Car Corporation, Detroit, Michigan

Advertising section continued in rear of book

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Everybody's

NUMBER SIX DECEMBER, 1923 VOLUME XLIX

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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Everybody's takes all reasonable precautions for handling manuscripts submitted, but assumes no responsibility for their safety.

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"By George, you're there!" remarked Old Mack at the end of a week. "It is because Frederick is at the en' of the trail that I nevaire grow weary," she explained.

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A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Empty House

When Men Kill Under the Law Until Killing Is Like a Lust—They May Come to Kill Without the Law

By Edwina Levin MacDonald

Illustrations by James Reynolds

"HOPE you're not in a hurry, miss."

At sound of the first officer's voice, Annette Martin turned from her interested contemplation of scows, barges, and enormous canoes, which were pressing both sides of the steamer. In them sweating men worked prodigiously, bumping into one another, blaspheming, and expertly catching bales and boxes that were flung up from the hatchways by shrieking donkey engines. Passengers shouted over the steamer rail, demanding the immediate landing of their cargo, and were answered by a volley of oaths from the water. Everywhere was wrangling and dispute over possessions and precedence.

"When I leave home, I am in one great hurry," the girl said, a wistful smile playing about her soft red mouth, "but I have learn many thing since then, an' one is, that hurry mek the heart seek; an' tha's all."

The first officer studied her sympathetically. "A philosopher, eh? Well, women who go over the Chilkoot need to be philosophers. I'll have the men break your baggage out at once." His eyes twinkled as he hurried away down the crowded deck.

Vaguely disturbed by the alien scene, Annette leaned over the rail to watch a scow shoot past a canoe, scraping it, almost capsizing it. The man in the canoe lifted his pole, striking the owner of the scow, who saved himself from pitching into the water by grabbing a miner's outfit atop several boxes.

A steady stream of small boats of every description plied back and forth between the steamer and the beach.

"How far do you go, inside?" asked a young man who had been studying Annette for some minutes.

"Inside?"

"I overheard Dillon say just now that you were going over the Chilkoot."

"Oh, yes, I go to Sunny Gulch. It is ver' far I mek sure. All place they are far in thees great America."

"You are from France?"

"From Paris." Into her dark eyes came the swift passion, the adoring tenderness of the native Parisian far from home.

Only a tiny area of her vivid face was visible. An enormous beaver hood descending to the level black brows and following the oval of her cheeks, concealed a pretty pointed chin, stopping short of a mouth so round and so red that it made Tom Warrick feel like laughing. And her eyes, too large for her small face, changed so rapidly in expression that he was continually trying to decide what it was of which they reminded him.

"Yes, it's a long way," he said. "Pretty close to the end of things. I know that section well. That is, I did, before the war."

"An' your home, it is in Sunny Gulch?"

"No, my home is in California. I was born in the North; but my folks moved to

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San Francisco when I was a youngster. I came back here and joined the Mounted Police for excitement. Then the war came."

Her eyes filled. "Ah my poor country! She is a sad place since the ter-r-rible war."

"This your first trip to Alaska?" he asked, to change the current of her thoughts.

"Yes. I am coom to get married. My fiancé, I have met him in a hospital in France. Ah, he lie there in mos' great pain an' nevaire so much as mek one leetle groan. An' he tek those medal an' ribbon which are for the brave, as one tek a drink of water when not ver' thirsty."

The young man turned to the press on the water, seized by a curious sense of dissatisfaction. He had wondered about her many times on the way up from Seattle, likening her to a beautiful flamingo that had strayed from the tropics on its way to die in the land of the great snows. And he had wanted tremendously to speak to her; but for all that she appeared so eager and friendly, and so voluble, there was about her a shy reserve which had warned him against any attempt at conversation which did not come about in the most casual fashion. Today had brought his first opportunity. And she was going inside, to be married. That possibility had not crossed his mind. He should have known, of course.

"Your fiancé—he is an American?" he asked.

"He is born in a city call Dawson. That much he tell me one day in the hospital, though he did not spik moch, like my countrymans who are so brave, yet cannot keep one leetle thought to themself. All the time they talk, talk. Always they laugh an' jest when life is mos' *difficile*. Even the Grand Passion come gleebly on the tongue as a poem which one have learn quite well from moch repeating. The French man he is like the flat fiel' with all he reechness reveal." She lifted her shoulders in an expressive gesture. "Me, I fin' more charm in the adventure of hidden trail. An' you? Do you not fin' it the same?"

"In my work with the Mounted Police," Warrick said quietly, "I learned to distrust hidden trails. If I found the open country more monotonous, I also found it safer."

"PERHAPS that is true of the trail; but not of life, which is a book to read, an' mos' dull eef you know in the firs' page how the las' will en'. My father he paint those picture which will mek heem famous when we are all dead, an' which mek heem poor now, an' he say it is the canvas which awake up the imagination which is the great work; not that one which may be all seen at the glance."

That accounted for her turn of thought. He had heard her talking several times to other passengers and always in the same fanciful imaginative way. It was unbelievable that the mother of a girl like this would let her . . .

"My mother she is dead," the girl said as if reading his thought, "an' my father he do not weesh me to coom. I know little of my fiancé, but that he is brave soldier an' fight for France. Also I love heem. But *mon pauvre père* he have three grown daughter to settle, an' husban's are ver' scarce since the war; so when I tell heem I am determination, he sigh an' go back to hees work. Then he forget all about it, till I am ready for sail." Her brown eyes were whimsical. "Artists they are like that—protes', sigh, submit. They are so busy." Now in swift change she became politely serious. "Is it that you go back to the Mounted Police?"

"No. I shall just wander about for a while. I want to freeze the fumes of gas and a German prison out of my nostrils; then I'm going back to California and settle down."

Her face lighted.

"Ah, perhaps there is some nice girl who wait for you."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you. But there's no one." His exaggerated tone of regret instantly aroused her sympathy and also her wonder. Looking at his tall lithe form, his blue eyes in which there was a nice blending of humor and seriousness, his boyish face fine yet strong, and his hair like thick sunlight, she found it impossible to believe that there was not some nice girl waiting to make him a good and adoring wife.

"But why? I mek sure you could have mos' any girl you choose," she said naïvely.

"Suppose I should choose you?" His eyes were teasing; but a note of seriousness was in his voice.

The color mounted in her pale face. Her eyes grew indignant, then smiled. "Sometime jus' at firs' I do not un'stan' the leetle

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joke. I think you are mek fun of me; but I know it is not so; so I smile."

"No, I wasn't making fun of you," he said gravely. "By the way, my name is Warrick, Tom Warrick. I may be up Sunny Gulch way sometime before next spring."

"Oh, that will be so nice! I shall watch for you. My name it is Annette Martin, an' my husban'—ah, here is Meester Dillon to tek me to my boat. Oh, I am so *excitée*, I feel a leetle sick. *Au revoir*, Meester Warrick." She put out her hand impulsively, "I shall say a prayer for you to St. Anthony who is the patron saint of the lovers, an' he will, how you say, feex it up."

"Come on, Miss Martin," grinned Dillon. "I've got your stuff out. Almost had to kill a miner who was bound that he was going to get out ahead of you."

The first officer piloted her down the deck to where a small craft, driving between two seventy-foot canoes loaded with outfits, threatened to collapse, but slewed to the landing stage. The boatman stood up and began berating the impassive Indians in the canoes, then turning to the girl, offered her his hand.

She stepped lightly into the boat, and waving to the first officer settled herself in the stern sheets.

"My name is MacCall," said the boatman, "called Old Mack. Came in on the ice last fall from Sunny Gulch. Thorn asked me to fetch you in this spring."

"He did not coom to fetch me?" asked Annette, with a sudden sinking of her heart. She had hoped in spite of his letter that Frederick would meet her at the boat.

"Couldn't get away," said the man laconically. "It's a long trip. An' I was comin' out anyhow."

Drawing her feet up out of the water that splashed into the boat, she turned back to the heterogeneous mob leaning over the steamer rail, waving to a few boat acquaintances who were not wrangling with the small boatmen. Tom Warrick lifted his cap to her, his hair glinting an instant in the sun. Then his face fell into shadow.

Adventure of the hidden trail! Yes, for a man! But a girl! What was there in Sunny Gulch for a girl nurtured among pictures, music, laughter and song?

Beautiful, eager-eyed, going into the great frozen north to join her life to that of a man she had met in an army hospital, when the blood ran high and men were measured by the set of a uniform, the endurance of their thews.

How many girls had been swept out of those fervid days into alien lands to learn that hero-worship belongs to war, and will not carry on in times of peace; that the flame of patriotism is not the flame which warms the fireside!

A sudden distaste for the country seized Warrick. He felt a temptation to turn back. There was after all nothing to do beyond the Chilkoot that he had not already done. But was there anything in California? Nothing anywhere. He had seen too much. Done too much. He was war-weary. World-weary.

Not being given to self-analysis, it did not occur to him as strange that he had been looking forward to months in the wilds with a thrilling sense of impatience; that this imponderable discontent had seized him suddenly when a soft voice had said: "I am coom to get married."

WHEN Annette saw herself in the beaver coat and cap, and a short skirt that had been selected at the trading post by Old Mack, also in shoes that made her small feet look enormous, she laughed until the tears came.

"I am like one large bear," she declared as she swung out on the trail, insisting that she would walk, the poor dogs having too much to pull already.

Old Mack's eyes approved her. City living had left untouched the joyous freedom of her step, the young resiliency of her slim body. They overtook and were overtaken by an endless stream of adventurers going over the Chilkoot. Sometimes they divided their blankets with one who had lost his outfit; next day, cold, wet and leg-weary, they would come upon a party who would give them a nice hot dinner. The hospitality of the trail!

"By George, you're there!" remarked Old Mack when, at the end of a week, Annette was still full of enthusiasm. Walking, climbing, trudging ankle-deep in muck, crossing angry streams, pushing through rain and sleet, she never murmured. "It is because Frederick is at the en' of the trail that I can nevaire grow weary," she explained. "Love it keep me warm an' untired all time.

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Is it that you have love some one like that, Meester Ol' Mack?"

His eyes fell before her bright searching glance. "Yep, I did," he admitted. "Do."

"An' is it that you are married to her?" softly.

"No, she's married to another man. Come on. We got to ketch up with the outfit."

They had sat down to eat their lunch on the gaunt and ragged rib of a mountain. Above them towered a dazzling stretch of ice. Below them lay a fringe of dwarfed spruce. They came through the gap of the pass, clambering down to a lake where two dog carts and a dozen men had stopped to discuss the murder of an old trapper up on Dougal's Creek. All along the trail Annette had heard of this murder. Inured to the crimes of a large city, she was amazed by the widespread interest. It had occurred hundreds of miles up-country, there were no newspapers; yet everybody knew of it. They talked a great deal about the peculiar nature of it. Nobody seemed to know just what this peculiar nature was—only that it was exceptionally brutal and mystifying. No clue nor motive had yet been discovered.

The members of the Mounted whom they met now and again seemed less concerned than the gossips of the trail, and Annette decided that it was perhaps just a tale started by some garrulous horror lover.

OUT of Dawson the travelers thinned. Before leaving the Yukon, Old Mack stopped so that Annette could watch the breaking up of the river. Thousands of tons of ice had piled on either shore, like huge opalescent walls in the sun. They were sorry to have to turn inland and leave the river behind them. Now human life was erased.

For days together no sound save the blood-chilling yell of the wolf-pack, the grunt of the caribou, the blare of the bull moose, and, at wide intervals, the bugle-note of the bear coming out of his winter quarters disturbed the glittering desolation.

The dogs labored over illimitable ice-fields, the men breaking trail for them where the snow lay soft and deep. With tongues hanging out, and shaggy bodies steaming, sure-footed as goats, they clung to the sides of mountains that dropped straight to dimly jutting rocks hundreds of feet below; or again, with a new burst of energy, they strove through virgin forests, bickering among themselves.

It amused Annette to see how the leader dog captained the others, snapping at a laggard, never shirking himself, and merciless with his underlings. Sometimes, in spite of her sympathy for them, her feet would be so sore that she would be forced to ride. But even then, she made a game of it. She was a poor little high-caste Chinese girl whose feet had been made useless.

Sometimes she thought of the fair, handsome man who had no nice girl waiting and who spoke of it so sadly even though his blue eyes laughed as he spoke; and she did not forget to say a little prayer to St. Anthony for him. But for the most part she was busy with her own dreams. Her heart was too full of a big silent man with still amber eyes in which was the lure of hidden things, to admit more than an occasional thought for Tom Warrick. Yet she hoped he might come to Sunny Gulch. She wanted him to know Frederick.

At last, after days on days in which the fleeting wild things, the savage sound of them, alone stirred an empty land, there came the steady metallic thwacking of an ax assaulting the stillness of the green and white world—the triumphant birth-wail of civilization in the wilderness.

"Those ax, she soun' more close! Is it not so?" cried Annette sitting suddenly upright among her robes.

Old Mack let his humorous gaze rest on her for a moment before answering.

"Sound is powerful deceivin' in these parts, especially the sound of an ax," he said as the dogs disappeared over the ridge.

Of a sudden the sled came to the top, swaying like a winged thing among the spruce trees before beginning its descent. Far below in a dazzling embrace of sun and snow an unpainted village huddled—a smudge upon the face of prismatic immensity.

"Oh, *le bon Dieu!*" Annette began, pouring forth an avalanche of excited French.

"You'll have to talk American, miss, if you want me to talk back," Old Mack chuckled.

"Oh, ees-cuse! I am so ees-cited, I mek me forget. An' you are one bad man, Meester Ol' Mack, to fool me. It is not one-half

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hour since I hear those soun' of ax, an' you tell me Sunny Gulch is one long way off! An' look! It is there. I mek sure. *N'est-ce pas?*"

Eyes, brows, mittened hands and flexible shoulders assisting speech, she pointed to the amebic blot on the blank page of the valley.

"Yes'm, that's Sunny Gulch all right." His eyes, narrowed by the hard glitter of the land, were pitying as they rested on her voluble little person. Weeks of hardship had failed to slake her ardor. "Didn't want you to get all het up," he continued.

Annette sank back among her robes choked by the tumult of her emotions.

What would Frederick say to her? Now that she could speak to him in his own language, he would perhaps tell her of the tumultuous passion betrayed by the hammer blows of his heart against her soft bosom, as, in sudden and savage silence, he had crushed her to him on that far day in France. He would unfold to her the mystery that glittered wraithlike behind his narrowed lids. What mystery, adventure, romance must be behind that iron control, that impregnable reserve!

How the girls had envied her when at last a letter had come to her from the far north of America! He was building their home. She was to learn to speak English and to come to him the following spring. And here was the end of all that, and the beginning of . . .

"WELL, miss, this is Paris," chuckled Old Mack as the dogs slid to a stop.

A short street where the snow lay deep, a big log structure advertising itself as "The Lost Dog Inn," a small church with a dozen shanties squatting forlornly between—that was Sunny Gulch. Impotent ice-fields stretched away to a far-off boundary line of blackish-green forests. Around it glittering glaciers rose, range on range, like turreted walls stabbing into a sky of hard bright blue.

Men in mackinaws and fur caps surrounded the dog-carts, clamoring for news of the great world outside—letters and papers from home.

With a swift movement, Annette freed herself and stood up, searching the unkempt crowd for a tall, trimly clad man with narrow amber eyes.

"Well, don't you reckon you better git out?" drawled a voice that sent the blood racing through her veins.

Frederick, in bearskin coat and soiled corduroy trousers, towered over her. His lips were unsmiling, his eyes remote.

"Ah, *mon ami*," she cried between laughter and tears, "as I have coom so far jus' for get out, I thank I better do so." With a little sob she flung herself on his breast. He lifted her from the sled. Then, disengaging her arms, he turned wordlessly toward the Inn. He did not pause, nor look back.

Annette stood still, her amazed eyes following the slovenly man, whose big khaki-clad form had caused a flutter in more than one virginal heart in France; who had seized upon all the sentiment and romance of Annette's own warm young womanhood, and held it in thrilling subjugation these two years; whose kisses had lured her into this terrifying land of white silence.

"Reckon you must be tired," Frederick remarked unemotionally, as in stumbling haste, she came up beside him.

He led the way into a large firelit room. The hewn log walls, chinked with rags, where the mud plaster had fallen out, were smoke-blackened and hung with guns, fishing tackle, the skins of animals, and an array of mackinaws, fur caps and broadaxes. Rough benches, home-made chairs, camp stools, and a number of boxes filled with ashes, and used as spittoons, cluttered the unswept floor. Three doors, one of which was closed, furnished both light and air.

Two men in maudlin inebriation slopped over a bar at the far end of the room. A fat bristled human pig served them. Before the fire was an untidy woman in the act of throwing a log, too big for her frail strength, into the blaze. A young man, little more than a boy, standing to one side of the fireplace took the log from her.

"Miz Johnson, this is Miz Thorn—to be," said Frederick.

As Annette drew within the circle of light the woman turned. Her skin was tanned to a leather-like hue and thickness. Her black hair, twisted into a tight knot at the top of her head, escaped in straight wisps about her ears and neck.

"Howdy!" she said, her dull eyes sweeping the girl uninterestedly. With her foot she pushed a stool forward. The stool fell over. She stared at it a second, then, her

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In the room it seemed to Annette that his mild eyes changed, became darting searchlights that swept every corner.

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vacant gaze drifting, she took up a long iron and began to prod the fire.

Laughing nervously, Annette removed her mittens. Her hands fumbled at the buttons of her coat. Frederick had already sauntered over to the bar around which a few of the disappointed men were beginning to gather. Those who had received mail were still outside reading and exchanging news.

"Let me help you," said the young man who had taken the log from the woman. Obviously, he did not belong to the country. He came forward as Annette shrugged out of her coat. "My goodness, but you're a little thing for such a big coat! My name's Miles. Been out two months. Great country if you don't stay too long."

Annette warmed to him, but she could not speak. A lump was in her throat. To think that a stranger must help her!

The young man picked up the overturned stool and placed it near the fire. Smiling in dumb gratitude she sat down. But her round red mouth quivered. Unshed tears hung in her eyes. With fingers that trembled, she untied the hood, and a mop of black ringlets came tumbling out to cluster about her brow and cheeks.

"My goodness!" the boy repeated admiringly.

At his exclamation Mrs. Johnson straightened up, and with a coarse-sleeved forearm brushed the wisps of hair away from her forehead. She stared at the vivid young face in the firelight, struggling for control, as at one of the snow-covered stones outside.

"Where you from?" she asked abruptly.

"From Paris, France." Annette's tears overflowed in spite of her effort to blink them back.

"My God!" The woman spoke without a trace of feeling. But the very lack of emotion with which the words were uttered gave them a sinister meaning.

"Why is it that you exclaim 'My God!' as if it were some strange or dreadful thing that I should come from Paris?" Annette demanded, in her excitement speaking in her native tongue.

"I'm French, too," replied the woman in excellent French. Her voice, however, lost nothing of its dreary listlessness. "I came from Baton Rouge, Louisiana."

Knowing instinctively that the woman had said all she would say, Annette stared at her, trying to read the dull face. What was the connection between Paris, France, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana? "French, too." That was it. But why that terrible "My God"? With an odd impulse toward flight Annette turned toward the front door.

The men, having exhausted their mail and tucked the newspapers away for leisurely enjoyment, were trooping in. They shook themselves and stamped the snow from their feet, then congregated about the bar where the fat pig, whom they called Johnson, served them. He was evidently the keeper of the Inn and the husband of the woman from Baton Rouge.

"Here, Annette, drink this," Frederick was saying. He extended a glass. "Hit'll warm you up. We ain't got no time to waste. Wanta git started by twelve o'clock."

"Started? Where are we going, Frederick?" She was trying to see in the big figure of hulking stolidity some semblance of the clean strapping soldier she had remembered so long.

"Home," he said.

"And is not our home in Sunny Gulch?"

"No. Drink your toddy."

Annette gulped the sweet hot mixture and handed the glass back to him.

"Now come, let's get hit over."

"Get what ovair, Frederick?" Fear that amounted to nausea shook her.

"What'd you come fur? Hustle. The parson's waitin'."

Annette turned to the woman, her cold hands clutching painfully at each other. "Oh, but my things! My wedding-dress. It is in my trunk, all pack-ed in tissue-papair. I mus' change. Mees Johnson——"

"Ha!" Frederick gave a harsh squawk of one syllable which was evidently intended for a laugh. "Tissue-paper! Good place fur it. I 'low the dress you got on is good enough. Come on."

"But Frederick, are we not to be married in the church?"

"TOO cold. All set, parson!" he called.

A man came out of a shadowy corner near the bar, a book in his hand. Frederick grasped her arm; dragged her to the center of the room. The men left the bar, forming a circle around the bridal party, and without preliminary the minister began reading the marriage service.

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She had a sense of unreality. It was as if her spirit had somehow escaped from her body and stood hesitant on the brink of limitless space. If she but moved she would surely be hurled downward and forever lost. The indeterminate light of the fire gave to the unshaven faces of the men a brooding savagery. Through the open door appeared the aching whiteness of the land meshed in silence. A confused feeling that she had been trapped by some strange thing, some relentless and immutable power, seized Annette.

This was not her wedding, for which she had lived for many months, poring over English lessons, and shooting lessons, which she would need if Indians came; for which she had accumulated her dainty trousseau. It was a dream, a nightmare. Presently she would awaken to find herself still on the white trail.

"Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

It was over.

The men were shaking her hand, slapping Frederick on the back, laughing in loud guffaws. They swept him precipitously away from her toward the bar. He had not yet kissed her.

The minister took her hand and spoke to her, but though she smiled faintly by way of acknowledgment, she did not hear him. In the grip of a curious detachment she moved toward the fire. Mrs. Johnson followed, seeming about to speak, but she changed her mind and fell to prodding the fire.

"Why do you not do your nice hair softly around your face?" Annette asked her in French, then wondered why she had asked it.

"Takes pins," the woman answered laconically, in English.

The young man was still standing at one side of the hearth. He evidently had not moved while she was being married. How foolish one was to think and plan so much about a wedding when it could be dispatched like that! It had all been so casual. A few minutes ago she had not been a wife. Now she was. She wanted to laugh. The young man was looking at her strangely. He had been so pleasant before.

Old Mack came over and gripped her hands hard for a minute. "God help—" He paused. Then to Annette's surprise, dropping his careless habit of speech, he continued with sharp incisiveness, as if to cover a sudden emotion, "God bless you, little woman of warm skies, and give you a sturdy soul," adding as if to himself: "*Aut vincere aut mori.*"

What did he mean by that? And what meant this new Old Mack? Was everybody in this frozen land masquerading? Mrs. Johnson dressed and looked like a servant and spoke beautiful French. Old Mack spoke usually in a strange idiom which one had difficulty in understanding, then lapsed suddenly into Latin which he thought she did not know.

What did he mean by it? A bride—"either to conquer or to die"! But of course that was life. Perhaps he meant no more.

"They say," began Miles, drawing up a stool and sitting down beside Annette, "that when Mrs. Johnson came out here she was the gayest, liveliest little thing a man ever saw. Mad for fun and pretty clothes and good times. All the men for two hundred miles around were nutty about her. Old Mack had just come out, as I have, for the adventure. College man, though you wouldn't think it. He saw Mrs. Johnson and stayed. Became a clod like her. Sooner or later," he went on, "it gets 'em all. Sometimes I feel it myself."

"It?" Annette repeated.

"The cold. The silence. See that picture in there on the wall?" With a motion of his head he indicated the portrait, in the next room, of a dimpled laughing girl with a saucy mouth and defiant head. "That was Mrs. Johnson seven years ago."

"*Non, non!*" Annette shrank back with a little cry. She would not believe such a horrid thing.

A bell jangled loudly in an adjoining room and Frederick slouched over to Annette.

"Hello, Thorn," said Miles.

"Howdy, Mr. Miles," replied Frederick coldly. "Come on, Annette, dinner's ready. Let's git chow over. We got to make a start fur home."

ANNETTE'S eyes swept the yellow-diamond brilliance of a curious world astir with spring. Snow-drifts slid from the ridges; white burdens dropped ceaselessly from the trees *plump-plump*, on ice-fields; or breaking among the limbs, sifted

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down in a needle-rain that stabbed the face, melting on robes and giving to the sled the look of a great wet dog. Everywhere was the uneasy movement of awakening—an awakening in which there was no laughter, no song. The forest peoples slipped out of shadows, and were gone even as they appeared, ghostly presences in an abandoned house.

Spring. And in France, which she had left so many ages ago, cows were grazing in rich meadows, orchards were in riotous bloom. Birds sang loudly in the fat young green of the trees. Boulevards were gay with festive throngs.

Since noon, Frederick in rough mackinaw and snow-shoes, a broadax thrown across his shoulder, had mushed along, sometimes behind, sometimes ahead of the dog-cart on which Annette was bundled. He spoke only to the dogs, breaking trail for them, lashing them unmercifully upon the slightest provocation, answering his young wife's timid questions in monosyllables.

And always they ascended. Even the valleys were but plateaus, each rising higher than the last—snow deserts slung between mountains that lifted to the sky. The haggard grandeur and impregnability of the land gave to Annette a troubling sense of constriction. The masses of naked rock, the solid fringe of spruce on the lower slopes, the panoramic splendor of the glaciers, the fathomless ravines, and the tremendous brooding silence, baffled her.

For some reason she could not get the picture of Mrs. Johnson out of her mind. The two pictures—the dreary brief-spoken sloven, and the saucy laughing girl of but seven years ago. It was as if a door had opened giving her a glimpse of a corpse in which the beautiful soul still lingered, making no effort to escape. Then the door had closed.

At sunset Frederick pitched tent near an icebound creek, on the side of a mountain where they were sheltered from the wind. Annette cooked supper, after which they sat, staring into the fire. Enclosed by the black walls of the forest, a shower of stars overhead, they were immersed in the silence. Beyond the range of the fire's light, teeming, turbulent life whispered treacherously. And fear that was like the smother of water tightened Annette's throat. It rolled over her in sickening waves. The fire fell into coals. Frederick turned and her color rose under his steady regard. She felt shy and embarrassed, and her heart ached strangely. All at once he reached out and swept her into a crushing embrace. And now for some reason which she could not define, instead of the thrilling sweetness, the exultation always called up by the memory of his fierce embrace, she felt revulsion. She struggled furiously in his arms, beating against his breast with her small fists.

"Wha's matter?" he demanded.

"All day you have not kees me when I am so hongry for one small kees, an' now I do not weesh for kees."

Into his eyes came a leap of yellow flame, but it was the flame of sunlight on glaciers, a blaze of cold lightning. He held her a moment, then pushing her roughly away charged into the darkness.

"FREDERICK!" she cried. "Coom back! Some beast it may keel you." Only a tearing in the brush answered her. She called again and again. What had she done? What had possessed her? Why, when she had hungered so for his lips, had she felt that sudden wave of repulsion? Had she changed, or had he?

After an eternity she heard him returning. She was horrified when he came into the light. He was wet, disheveled, torn; but calm and remote.

"Hit's time fur you to turn in," he said, sitting down to dry himself. "I'll roll up out here."

"But Frederick, you must not sleep out in those terrible cold."

"Got to keep the fire," he said bruskly. "Keep critters away!"

She went into the tent sick with perturbation. She wanted to tell him she was sorry. But even now she shivered at the thought of his outburst after all those hours. She felt that she must surely scream if he came into the tent. He did not come in.

And all through the next day she was terrified lest she had offended him beyond repair. If, however, he were angry; if he were disgusted with her, or if he were merely indifferent—whatever he felt, she had no way of knowing. And she was sick with apprehension.

She had a Catholic horror of breaking her

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marriage vows. He was her husband. He had a right to kiss her when it pleased him. She wanted to ask his forgiveness, but somehow, she could not. And increasingly there came to her a sense of removal from all the sights and sounds of the living world—an odd feeling of suspension in limitless space from which there could be no return.

Evening brought a terrifying experience.

Frederick was chopping wood some two hundred yards from camp. Annette was starting a fire when a crackling in the brush caught her ear, and looking up she beheld, at a short distance from her, the head and shoulders of a huge bear emerging from a cavern that had been screened by brush. Evidently just awakening from his winter sleep, he paused, his body still half hidden, his eyes blinking stupidly at her. Frederick, higher up on the ridge, was out of range of the blinking eyes in which already hunger lust was wakened. Hampered by the tangle of brush pulling against his winter coat, the bear gave a sudden awkward lunge.

ANNETTE was too paralyzed even to call; but Frederick had seen and was taking aim with Annette almost in line with the menacing black barrel. A fraction of an inch too high and the shot would enter her young body. There was, however, no time for Frederick to bring himself into a safer position. A second of hesitation meant death to her—death more terrible than a faltering aim would bring. She threw her hands over her eyes. The gun spat twice in rapid succession. It was answered by a roar and a tearing up of brush.

She dropped to the ground as if shot, her eyes still covered, waiting for the hideous impact of that lunging body. Silence unspeakable. Now came the whack of steps on the ice, the snapping of twigs. When she uncovered her face, Frederick was running—not toward her, but toward his kill. The great brute had fallen where it stood, slipping part way back into the cavern.

There could be no miss for his cool eyes, his steady hands. This was the Frederick of the trenches. She rose weakly. Her legs wabbled under her. She felt dazed and sick; but suddenly happy. Clearing the space between her and Frederick, she threw her arms around him.

"Oh, Frederick!" she sobbed. "It is not that you have change since that day in France when you love me so much."

Pushing her aside as if she were a bit of brush in his way, and sinking one great hand in the shaggy throat of the bear, he whipped out his hunting knife. Its sharp blade smashed downward, curved instantly upward, and Frederick held in his left hand a mass of fur and flesh. In the creature's throat was a curious hole as if a huge bite had been taken out by terrific jaws. With something like bestial glee, Frederick now fell upon the bear, relieving it in swift slashes of its magnificent coat. The huge limbs moved spasmodically as if conscious of pain.

Annette ran shudderingly back to the fire. She could not look at what was going on. Of course Frederick had to kill the creature; but he might have waited till life was gone from its body. This was like skinning him alive.

Vastly impressed as she had been by his unhesitating decision and coolness when the slightest wavering or unsteadiness would have meant certain death for her, she was yet shocked by the sight of his face, his absorption and ruthlessness; she was puzzled by the fact that with her lying on the ground, for all that he knew the victim of one of those two deadly shots, he had gone to the bear, apparently forgetting her very existence.

She could hear the horrid rip of skin being torn away from the warm flesh. Her eyes went against her will to the nauseating work over which Frederick bent in a sort of triumphant fury, as if the beast were fighting him back. Then, in a burst of light, it came to her that this man who had shown no affection for her save one emotional explosion on the previous evening, had, seeing her in mortal danger, shot with so sure an aim that he had *known* where both shots went, and was now swept by a passion such as a lioness feels toward her cubs. His remoteness had been penetrated, his stolidity shattered by the menace to her. The spectacle which shocked her was but the evidence of that wild love which had won her.

And she exulted in it.

MID-AFTERNOON of the third day brought Annette and Frederick to their home in the wilds—a cabin friendless of tree or shrub, set in a white leviathan dipper, over which brooded the infinite hills.

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Along the western rim of the dipper, a wooded creek crawled like a blackish green serpent across the snow-fields to pass their cabin door on the south.

Here was the end of the world. The end of its petty cares, the end of its thrilling stir—its strife. In the cities millions scurried, toiling, weary, for what was to be had here for the taking.

This thought lightened Annette's spirits, and with a gay little song she set herself to put her new house in order. There was one large room, the floor of hard-packed earth. At one end was a wide fireplace, with shelves on each side reaching to the exposed rafters. They were crowded with dishes, pots, tinned foods, sugar, coffee and salted meats in utmost confusion. Opposite was a homemade bedstead piled with fur robes, a mottled mirror on a shelf, several guns in one corner, and some farm implements. In the rear stood a flour barrel, a crude table consisting of planks laid across two wooden horses and covered with oilcloth, and a long bench on which was set a tin basin, a bucket and dipper. The chairs, like the bedstead and table, were homemade. A long woodshed was attached to the back of the cabin connected with a rude shelter for the dogs.

Here was primitive life such as Annette had never known. She had never owned anything. Her father had hired their home as well as his studio. And there was a thrill in the thought that this was her kingdom, hers and Frederick's—their house—their land—as much of it as they could use.

Her early apprehensions yielded somewhat to the enthusiasm of her sunny nature.

But in spite of her efforts to appear happy, the long evenings alone with her husband were very difficult for Annette. Frederick seemed almost never to have need of speech, and to this daughter of a voluble race the silences were often frightful. He would not talk about the incidents that made up his days and so Annette would fall back on reminiscence.

He interrupted her one evening when she was laughing gaily at an amusing story she was relating.

"Folks don't talk 'bout the past out here," Frederick said shortly. "I 'low you better be thinkin' 'bout your home you got now."

Annette was astonished.

Not speak of the past! But how was that possible when all things were forever getting into the past? What else could one speak of? Especially in this land where nothing ever happened? She pondered this for days, appalled by the limitation it set on conversation which had been as much a part of her life as bread.

But she had no time for introspection. There were three meals a day to prepare, blackened tins to make like new silver, Frederick's clothes to wash and mend. She brought forth a few ornaments from her trunk and set them about; two of her father's paintings and some bright prints were hung on the walls. From a coarse sheet of Frederick's she made curtains for the one window, yellowing them in coffee and stenciling them in bright green.

TAKING no notice of her pretty industry, Frederick went about his work, clearing the fields, burning brush, and looking after his traps. He rose early, and was sometimes gone all day, returning with fresh pelts or meat or fish. If she wanted to know how he came by some rarely beautiful pelt, he would say "Trap" or "Shot." The exciting details for which she hungered he never gave.

She never mentioned her beloved France now; but would rack her brain for something to talk about. Silence embarrassed her; made her feel ill at ease. She could not tell Frederick the same things over and over every day. "I dug a bit in my garden." "I scrubbed the pots." "I studied my English books."

That her husband loved her in his strange way she knew. There were moments when she was overwhelmed by the storm of him—when his heart pounded against her, and her body ached in his embrace. If she wished that there was more tenderness, more affection in their daily contact, she blamed herself.

Night after night, hour upon hour, Frederick would sit in absent stolidity, staring into the fire as if the living soul of him were lost in a void.

There came, however, an evening when he sat well back from the fire, his feet firmly planted on the floor, his shoulders rigid, every part of him curiously alert, his eyes going toward the door or window in curious expectancy. And immediately after supper he put out the fire, covering the coals

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in the swift way of a panicky woman abnormally afraid of fire. Now and again he would start up—listening.

"What is it, Frederick?" Annette demanded.

He seemed not to hear, and she was frightened by the look of his eyes. He slept in his chair, like a cat, awake every few minutes, and before breakfast the following morning he was off. Annette saw him running as if for his life across the rim of the treeless basin at the back of the cabin. Late that night he came in wet to the hips, his clothes torn, his face and hands gashed, to sink down before the fire breathing as if he had been running for hours. But no questioning could elicit any information as to what he had been doing. He ate ravenously; then sat staring into the fire, his nervousness regarding it gone, his calm restored.

Annette was terrified. After all, what did she know of him? A brave soldier, yes. But perhaps as a wolf is brave. She had peopled his reserve with romance and daring. What were the realities that hid behind that glacier-like impenetrability? Was it but the monotony and hardness of the land that Old Mack had in mind when he gave her his curious blessing? Or might there be something more sinister—something connected with Frederick of which they knew and she did not?

IN A desperate effort to shut out uneasy thoughts she set herself to create an interest in the future. Some day when they had saved enough money from the fine furs Frederick trapped, when all their splendid acreage would be in cultivation, they would build a house with many rooms and furnish it with beautiful things brought at great cost from far cities. She could see each room, find enormous entertainment in placing the various articles of furniture, and then changing them all around again. She talked to Frederick about it. Each night she had some new thing to tell him.

"See here," he said at last. "Ain't the home you got good enough for you?"

Annette stared at him silently. So much for the future! No past. No future. The present, like the interminable wilds, completed the boundaries of hope here, where all the glistening color of the day, the nebulous beauty of the night, only hid a relentless savagery, waiting to strangle the heart in its struggle against tediousness and futility. Ambition had no place in this land where to eat and sleep comprised all of living. She was hemmed in by walls of cold, silence and solitude.

When, some two weeks after the evening on which her husband had put out the fire and had seemed so alert and listening, a Mounted Police officer stopped at Annette's door, she experienced a vague chill of fear.

"Thorn about?" asked the man with a smile which ordinarily would have charmed her, but which now increased her perturbation. What was it that Frederick had feared on that distressful evening? Not the police, else he would not have got over the fear as he had. This thought eased her mind, then brought her up sharply on the fact that she had feared the police for Frederick.

"He have gone into the hills for wood," she said faintly.

"Ripping sunset," the man remarked. His mild rather absent eyes were on the last streaks of the sun now hid behind the hills. His face, like the faces of all the men of this country, was weather-beaten and had the grim, relentless set of a determined and tireless fighter.

"Thorn ought to be back soon. If you should invite me to supper—what?" He broke off with a wide smile that broke up the stern lines.

"If you stay till my husban' coom, an' he invite you, I shall be mos' please to have you."

"A most dutiful invitation. I accept with thanks." Dismounting he threw the bridle over the horse's head, and followed her into the cabin.

And now it seemed to Annette that his mild eyes changed, became darting searchlights that swept every corner of the room. Conscious of an increasing fear of him, she went about her preparations for supper. She expected, for no reason that she could think of, that he would ask her all sorts of questions. But he contented himself with trying, unsuccessfully, to make friends with Bob, the cat, and talking casually about the early spring, the prospective crops, and the late World War.

"If it had stopped with the Armistice, we might shut our minds on it as upon an ugly dream. But it's still going on in a

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crime-wave such as the world has never before seen."

"But in thees country where there is nothing to do, men can do no wrong, I think," she suggested timidly.

His mild eyes studied her. "Bally lonesome for a girl from Paris, I take it?"

"Oh, I have much to do," she said hastily. "But those criminals, what is there for them when there are no banks to rob or jewels to steal?"

"Murder."

"Men murder for gain, is it not so? Or for a woman."

"We've been in the murdering business for several years and it wasn't for women particularly, and as far as I can see we haven't gained much except a vast disregard for human life. Where men used to murder for a reason, they now murder from habit."

He spoke beautifully, and should have been easy to speak with, but hungry as she was for speech that little nagging fear stilled her fluttering tongue. She did not pursue the topic; and he likewise fell silent. Presently it occurred to her that he knew she was from Paris. From France—any one would know that; but how could he be so sure when she had told no one but Mrs. Johnson? And Frederick told nothing to any one. She stirred her biscuits, rolled them out and set them to bake in an iron skillet on a bed of coals, heaping coals on the lid.

Then: "How is it you say I come from Paris? My husban' he tell you so?"

The man chuckled. "Thorn isn't given to telling things; but if you told one person in Sunny Gulch—well, news is scarce here—we pass it along."

She smiled at that. "And you? Where is it you coom from? Not here, I mek sure."

"No, I was born in Montreal. There's Thorn now."

Annette caught the sound of the dogs in the valley. The man went outside and she, forgetting her biscuits, followed him. Frederick came on with swift easy strides, leaving the dogs to bring in the wood.

HE SHOWED no surprise, no pleasure nor displeasure at sight of the stranger. They shook hands and Frederick turned imperturbably to the dogs. She went back without having greeted him, conscious of an enormous sense of relief, and berating herself for her unjust suspicion.

The men came in together, the officer, whose name was Estes, doing so as a matter of course. He had been scouting the country for a man who had murdered the old trapper on Dougal's Creek last fall in a most brutal manner, and for no purpose, as even his fine pelts had not been touched. A party of hunters had come upon his body before the wolves had found it; otherwise there would have been nothing to show that they were not the murderers. A light snow had obliterated all tracks, and the police had been searching in the dark, as it were, ever since. Trailing every stranger.

"The man I've been tracking for three weeks," said Estes as they sat down to supper, "turned out to be an Englishman who'd come over this spring. A trifle touched. Shell shock. But harmless. Has a diagram of a place he saw in a dream where there's gold. Up in the high Selkirks. Poor devil! I tried to turn him back but he was inclined to think I meant to discourage him for reasons of my own."

"But perhaps he fool you an' he is the horrible murderer," cried Annette. Feeling very easy in her mind she watched the plate of her guest with flattering attention.

"Oh, no! He's blazed a trail all the way from Liverpool with his diagram. I saw him just after he arrived."

"An' you have no idee?" Annette was thrillingly horrified. And now her tongue was let loose.

"None. Not a clue." He was most positive. So different from the police she had met on the trail coming out. They had wanted one to think they knew, if they but cared to tell.

Frederick offered to put Estes up for the night; but the moon was up, so he decided to go on. He wanted to make his report. The spring air was mild and he had his blankets.

"He was a mos' nice man," sighed Annette when Mr. Estes had gone.

"Reg'lar bloodhound!" said Frederick. "Kin smell out a criminal a thousand miles off."

"But it is hees duty to run down those horrible murderers," she defended, thinking he spoke disparagingly.

"Then he better round up the world. We all been doin' some horrible murderin' of late years."

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"Ah, that was for save the worl'."

" 'Tain't saved it es I kin see. I 'low hit wus fur the pleasure o' killin' accordin' to law."

Though she had accredited her husband with deep thinking to account for his silence, this speech instead of verifying her estimate of him merely uncovered to her amazed mind the stark fact that here was the first evidence he had ever given of a thought.

CHOKED by the intensity of her longing for companionship, Annette sat on a bench outside her door on a June afternoon. The land, now dressed in a fleeting summer glory, nevertheless lay in sullen and implacable silence. Though she should sit here forever, no friendly conversation would ever fall on her ears, no laughter, no song, except what she made for herself. Her pretty trousseau had never been worn—never would be worn. There were no eyes to see but Frederick's and sight stirred no pleasurable thought in his mind. Nothing to do. Nowhere to go. All things finished. Forever alone.

Her rebellious gaze, drifting to the shiver of the trees along the creek, suddenly opened wide. She sprang up.

"*Un proche voisin!*" she cried, clapping her hands. "Oh, *le bon Dieu!*" She broke into a gay little dance.

Frederick, turning the corner of the house, watched her stolidly.

"Oh, Frederick, see!" Catching sight of him, she pointed to a thin line of smoke unrolling above the tree-line beyond the creek. "We have—how you say—some neighbor. Oh, we mus' mek them one *visite immédiatement*."

"Better let neighbors be. Country's full o' folks hidin' f'om the law. Liable to fill you full o' lead 'stead o' sayin' howdy."

The idea of some picturesque bandit hiding from justice across the creek from her took hold of Annette's fancy. Frederick did not encourage her to talk about their neighbor, but she thought of him constantly, and wove romantic tales around this mysterious person whose presence was discovered by that dark line uncurling against the sky. She came to watch for it as the one event of her day.

To make him different from the conventional bandit she gave him blue eyes, a strong, fine, yet boyish face and hair in which the sun gathered thickly.

And now a resentment and determined rebellion against this land which took the tongues of men, leaving them like dumb brutes, burned in her. She no longer tried to talk to Frederick. In a panic at the emptiness of her life, the creeping sterility of speech which she was beginning to find in herself, she plunged into her English books. Thus she came by slow degrees upon a fact heretofore hidden from her—Frederick was utterly illiterate!

If she had let the actualities of her life have dominion over her, she would have gone mad. But the insistent demand of her ardent young heart being for sunshine, she created her own. Because every instinct rebelled against gloomy introspection, she dwelt in her own glowing fancies, fastening upon the one occurrence outside the circle of her days—that line of smoke circling up beyond the creek. She came to look upon it as a friendly handshake, to watch for it, to speculate eagerly on the man whose hand it revealed. If, as sometimes happened, it failed to appear in the evening, she was conscious of intense disappointment, as if some tangible thing which had been her own had gone out of her life; and she would rise early the following morning and rush outside while Frederick was still asleep, a curious fear suffocating her. What joy would flood her when it stole up above the trees!

She spent long hours in gay imaginary conversation with the man across the creek—who was hiding from something so terrible that he could endure life here.

"Met the feller 'crost the creek yestiddy," said Frederick one morning, making one of his rare voluntary remarks. That he was in a vicious temper was revealed by the glitter of his eyes and a spasmodic movement of his hands.

Swift color flamed in Annette's pale cheeks. "Oh, why did not you ask heem to coom for supper an' mek one leetle *visite!*" she cried, ignoring his mood in her pleasurable excitement.

Frederick's eyes narrowed. "I didn't ker for no comp'ny, an' a married woman ain't got no business wantin' no comp'ny but her husband. An' ef I ketch him hangin' round this place I'll give him whut I'd give a wolf."

He went outside and began making ready

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Frederick obediently lifted his hands. There was a snapping in the brush and Tom Warrick stepped out into the open.

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for a necessary trip to Sunny Gulch. Mike, the leader dog, evidently sick, refused to come into harness and after several attempts, Frederick got him into a fence corner and began whipping him. The whole silent world rang with the poor beast's agony, but he made no effort to get up.

Annette ran to Frederick, pleading, crying, tugging at his arm. He thrust her roughly aside. Lash on lash descended. Mike's cries grew weaker; he whimpered and moaned piteously. His tortured eyes seemed to search out Annette, fixing themselves on her in despairing supplication. Anger like liquid flame swept her, drying her tears. It roared in her ears, dropped a red curtain across her vision. Without consciousness of what she did, she ran stumblingly to the sled, on which Frederick's gun lay.

"Stop it!" she cried, leveling the gun.

Frederick glanced around, eyes glistening yellow slits, and in hideous revelation it came to her that his eyes looked like that whenever he swept her into his savage embrace. Imperturbably he turned back to Mike. Annette fell to trembling. Of course, he knew she could not shoot him. She lowered the gun and fired.

Frederick whirled on her, catching her wrist in an excruciating grasp. "You kilt my best dog!"

She strangled the cry of pain that rose in her throat. Her eyes blazed at him. "You were keeling heem. *Cochon!*"

"That wus my business." He let go of her arm so suddenly that she stumbled, almost fell. She poured out a volley of angry French at him, as he finished hitching in silence. "I didn't aim to hurt yore arm," he finally blurted out; and went away without a good-by to her.

Annette was surprised and puzzled by his apology, and a little touched; yet try as she would she could not shake off the picture of his great hulking body, swaying to the rhythm of his brutish passion with the poor helpless beast at his feet. The scene fixed itself in her mind like a tremendous painting. She named it "The Brute," and associated it with that other hideous picture of the bear Frederick had shot on their way to the valley, the slashing of his knife and the tearing of skin from jerking limbs.

FREDERICK gave her no news of Sunny Gulch upon his return, and Annette knew better now than to ask for any.

"What's matter?" he demanded, when after supper, he tried to seize her in his arms and she shuddered away from him.

"The look in your eyes—it is the same as when you beat po' Mike. I cannot stan' it!" she cried.

He held her off, his hands gripping her shoulders, his eyes narrowed to pin slits. "Who's been here while I wus gone?" he demanded.

"Who is there to coom? If I should grow to be a hundred years ol' who would evaire coom? An' my heart it is like a great thirst in my breast for company. My mind is like the groun' which can bring forth no grain because it is gone dry. Ah, Frederick, I am wilt an' die in this desert of silence. Will you not sen' me back home?" She caught at his rough shirt, her dark eyes upturned in passionate pleading. Removing her hands she slouched over to the dying fire and sat down. He picked Bob from the floor by the loose skin at the back of his neck and deposited him on a lean knee. The cat settled into contented purring.

"You have tender heart, to save Bob from die, too," she continued sobbingly. "Is not you heart mo' tender for you wife?"

"Ha!" The sharp monosyllable was like the snapping shot of a rifle. It was as if he had struck her across the face.

She sprang up, an angry tide flooding her face, her eyes indignant. "An' you call youself brave man to laugh at a woman who beg mercy of you." Her expression changed swiftly. "Forgive me. You fight for my country, an' for that I love you as one gran' frien' an' I do not forget you are tender to Bob."

"Ain't nobody heard me say I was a brave man nor a soft one," he said slowly. "A wolf will fight fur his life an' a wolf's a coward."

She stared at him in amazement.

"I didn't fight fur yore country 'cause I wanted to," he added, "so you ain't got no call to love me none fur that. An' ef I saved you from the bear I'low hit wus 'cause I wanted you. An' I want you now jes' as bad es I done then. Whut you want ain't got nothin' to do with hit. Ef I git a cravin' fur deer meat I don't ast the deer his ruthers. An' I ain't astin' you yore ruthers."

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It was the longest speech she had ever heard him make, and its brutality nauseated her. She sat down, stunned by the completeness of her disillusion. Even his bravery had been but the desperate bravery of the beast.

She could not look at her husband without seeing beyond him that terrible picture of "The Brute." Like a life prisoner, she began to have but one thought—escape. It became a passionate hunger that would not be appeased. It absorbed her, increasing in proportion to her realization of its hopelessness.

AT THE crunch of a strange step on the path Annette lifted her head, her small hands pausing, half lost in bread dough. Alert, eager-eyed, she drew her hands from the dough and rubbing them first in dry flour, washed and dried them.

It was he! Her bandit friend of the smoke line. It could be no other. He had met Frederick. And he was coming to call. One swift glance in the mottled mirror. But she was too excited to see the vision reflected there of limpid eyes, red mouth and white face framed in black waves from which little ringlets escaped. She had a blurred glimpse of white and black and red with eyes leaping in the middle of it; and with a laugh she ran outside.

"You are the man who mek the smoke across the creek each morning an' night, which I watch, an' think it ees the flag of frien'ship, to mek me remin' that I am not alone in thees beeg country," she cried, running down the path to meet him. "I have play——"

The man, at sight of her, had stopped short, a look almost of unbelief in his blue eyes. She too stopped, but only for the space of a breath; then like a small tornado she reached him, grasping both his hands.

"Oh, it is you! To theenk it is you! An' I did not dream it all thees long while. Also I am very angry. You tell me when you reach Sunny Gulch you will coom to see me an' you have been here mos' a month an' you are jus' coom. But you are coom! An' I forgive you."

"I didn't — know — you — were — here. Mrs. Johnson told me about—Mrs. Thorn; but somehow I never connected you—Annette Martin . . . You see I haven't forgotten." He spoke painfully like one laboring under some tremendous shock.

"But I tol' you on the boat I am coom to get married, Meester Tom Warrick. You see I also have not forgot-ten."

"Yes, you told me, and I ought to have thought of it. But things came up—and I——"

"Forgot your promise to coom to see me," she teased.

"No. I didn't forget; but naturally nobody mentioned your maiden name. I doubt if they caught it. And I didn't like to inquire."

"But why?"

He looked down at the vivid little face turned eagerly up to him, and a slow tide of color crept from his neck to his temples, disappearing in the fair hair. His eyes held her gravely and with curious reluctance. Suddenly he laughed. "Wouldn't it have appeared a little strange of me to have gone looking for a lovely girl whose married name I did not know?"

"My husban' he tell me he have meet you," she interrupted, leading the way toward the cabin.

"Oh, yes, we frequently meet in the woods——"

She stopped in surprise. "Frequent-ly? He tell me only yesterday. But no matter. My husban' he do not think to spik of such thing. He is in the fiel' jus' now." She paused, considering for a second, her eyes clouded. Then with a defiant toss of her head that sent little tendrils dancing about her cheeks, she continued toward a bench in front of the cabin. "But you shall *visite* with me till he coom. I am jus' starve for conversazione. Sometime I get so discourage of thees solemn lan'. It nevaire laugh, nevaire play. Jus' frown an' keep still."

"Not much fun for a woman." He spoke as if some troubling thought which was in his mind must be considered at once.

"Ah, that is true! Even my trousseau I have not wear. How long life mus' seem where as here, it is a blank page with not even one little color on it."

Her eyes were like shadowy pools touched suddenly with sunlight. Her slim body expressed her happiness in little bird-like movements of shoulders, hands and head. "Ah, how I have watch the smoke which you mek! An' I have play that you are from my own beautiful France; that one day you

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will coom and bring me some word. An' oh, I have weesh for that day! An' here it is. My weesh it is coom true!"

It was impossible to be serious in the presence of her pleasure. His troubled meditations gave way to a boyish laugh—a gay laugh of understanding and sympathy.

"Ah, I like that!" she cried, tears of delight springing to her eyes. "It ees good to hear a man laugh once more."

Tom Warrick did not laugh at this revealing speech. His gravity returned and he led her to speak of her home in Paris. She had been starving for just such an opportunity and she almost forgot him as she babbled on about the old places and the people she loved. Presently she turned to him.

"Es-cuse me. I forget you are one stranger. I have watch the smoke from your house so long that I feel—even when I do not know who you are—that you are my frien'. I have talk to you many time in my lonely min', an' mek up, oh, such—how you say—*faire des romans?*—mos' fascinating!"

Warrick scarcely noted her words, so absorbed was he in watching her quick changes of expression, now gay, now sad, or fanciful.

"An' let me tell you thees which is mos' funny—thees man who mek the smoke an' whom I do not know is you—I mek heem look jus' like you in my min'. Is not that strange? I do not forget how you look an' I think to myself, now thees is a good face for a bandit to have because no one will suspec' such nice blue eyes an' pleasan' smile."

At her naïve confession of how he had, even though impersonally, occupied her thought, the color mounted in Warrick's face and his blue eyes were swiftly withdrawn from her.

"Is it because I am so seely that you do not smile?"

"You are not silly. You are—wonderful. And I want to be your friend indeed." He spoke with stumbling eagerness. "And if the time should come, Mrs. Thorn—when you need a friend—of course you won't—but if you should—things happen out here—" He broke off in confusion.

HER red mouth grew tremulous. "You are a mos' kin' frien'," she said, laying her hand on his arm. "The only frien' I have in all thees great America. Excepting my husban'," she added loyally. "He is mos' nice man, an' I love heem; but he is born here." She made a sweeping gesture, her palms turned outward toward the far-off glaciers as if to push them away. "An' thees lan' is very sad. While I—also my people—we love the gay dress an' are terrified of the gray life. Now tell me, is it that your home is like thees?"

"No. It is not like this," he smiled.

"Describe it to me," she demanded.

"Well, when God created the world," he said whimsically, "he saved the bluest skies, the softest winds, the brightest sunshine, the richest fruits and the rarest flowers and flung them together on the edge of the greatest sea—the result was a beautiful land called California. That's my home. It was probably the original Garden of Eden; but the jealous historians won't give us credit for it."

"Ah, I should love it! An' you leave it for thees!"

"I was a boy with a boy's desire for adventure. And adventure is here."

"For a man, perhaps. An' you tell me on the boat you join the Mounted Police. They have the grand adventure I mek sure."

"Sometimes it isn't so—grand."

"Ah, that is because you are weesh for something deeferent. The nice girl perhaps, in a pretty home by the great sea. I have pray to St. Anthony, as I promise, that you may fin' her. But now"—her eyes were troubled—"if he grant my prayer I shall lose my frien'."

The man laughed shortly. "There's no danger of his granting it—for some time. At least not so long as I stay in Alaska."

"But you will go back soon? Or is it that you will join the Police again, as I hope, an' stay?"

"I—no, I shan't stay after—next spring," he replied, continuing in a voice of suppressed passion: "I wish to God I had never come back."

She looked hurt at that, and he added, "I mean I wish Fate had not chosen me as the goat of one of the grimmest jests ever perpetrated on a fool. But it's only a shot in the dark and may come to nothing."

She could not quite follow this and she looked at him, puzzled. "Some one has been shot in the dark? But who?"

Trouble was wiped from his face in the

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sheer delight of her. "You're delicious. A shot in the dark is just an expression—means to look for something with very little idea of where to look, or what you're looking for perhaps."

"*Anglaise* it is so *difficile*," she sighed. "But why is it you feel so sad for thees something for which you do not know where to look? Is it so important to you?"

"More important than I like to think. Especially if the shot should go home."

"An' it will hurt you if the shot should go home in thees thing which you do not know what it is or where it is? That soun' mos' complication, is it not so?"

"It *is* very complicated." Then as if to change the subject he began to tell her how he came to be in the cabin across the creek.

"Funny thing, I was vacillating about a certain matter, half minded to go home, when Mrs. Johnson, the innkeeper's wife, went to her husband's cash drawer, took fifty dollars, exactly the price of the shack I'm in, bought it from Tobe Martin who'd been trying to sell it for two years; then she hunted me up and said: 'I've bought Tobe's house. I hear you're looking for a cabin. Family named Thorn lives across the creek. You'll like Mrs. Thorn. Give me ten dollars rent and you can have the house for a year.' I gave her the ten dollars, and two hours later she skipped out. Now why do you suppose she spent fifty dollars for a shack, got back ten on it, then left the country? Why didn't she keep the fifty? Of course she'll never come back. In a way she helped me to make up my mind," he finished musingly.

"Oh, is it that her husban' took her to her home in Baton Rouge?" asked Annette, in her eagerness ignoring the last part of his speech.

"No, a man called Old Mack took her. Seems he's been in love with her ever since she came out, a pretty fun-loving girl."

Annette's first sensation of horror at the sinfulness of Mrs. Johnson's act was followed by the thought: "Her soul has come alive." Aloud she said: "She talk to me on the day I am married an' I am so full of mos' kin' peety for her. It was wicked of her to go like that; but the good God, He understan' an' perhaps He will escuse her."

In response to her tempest of questions Warrick told her all he knew of the elopement.

When he rose to go, the sun was behind the hills; but a wide golden band coming through a crotch in the trees fell across the path in which the man and girl stood.

"If you enjoyed my visit," Warrick said, boyishly, as he took her hand, "why don't you ask me to come again?"

"My husban' he say to me a married woman, she should desire the company of no man but her own husban'," Annette replied, though without conviction, adding: "Desire, it come of itself and no one can help thees; but one can close the door of the heart, if the desire it is not correct. Is it not so?"

Again that swift mounting color in his face. He dropped her hand, with a laugh that was strained. "Quite right."

"Some Sunday when my husban' is at home, I shall be glad if you come."

"And in the meantime," he said, ignoring her stipulation, "you won't forget if you ever need help—if anything should happen when Thorn is not around. Do you know how to send up smoke signals?"

She nodded.

"I'll be watching for your smoke," he added, laughing.

"I will not forget."

ANNETTE watched Warrick disappear down the path, then went inside with a sigh and deftly gathering up the dough which had risen and was running over the pan, she molded it into rolls, and went about preparing the evening meal.

When Frederick came in his eyes fell instantly on the tracks in front of the cabin. He made no comment while Annette told him with nervous haste of their caller; but before supper she saw him follow the tracks to where she and Warrick had stood together on the path; and all through supper she was conscious of his steady regard. Without analyzing her reason, she did not mention Mrs. Johnson to him.

"Ef I'd a been Johnson," he volunteered calmly, breaking a biscuit in two, "I'd a followed 'em to hell, an' brought the woman back."

Annette stared at him in surprise. Of course he had heard the story when in Sunny Gulch. But since he had not spoken of it before, why now?

"An' I'd a fed her to the wolves," he continued, "fed her alive."

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"A mos' pleasant idea. But would not the wolves also enjoy the man?"

" 'Tain't the man's fault. Ef a woman sets herself to git a man, I 'low she gits him."

That she did not argue the point evidenced her estimate of his mentality. Looking at his great uncouth figure, his slovenliness and stolidity, unspeakable disgust seized her. She did not fear him. She hated him.

SUMMER passed as it had come—overnight. Clouds gray and threatening hung over the world, and the wild geese turned southward with frightened cries. Bees worked away as in a fever of haste, and the hush of an ominous whisper was on the wind —a warning to the provident little people of the wild, and a threat to the shiftless wolf-pack; the long night-call to old Grizzly.

Meanwhile, Annette's friend had kept beyond the creek. Oh, why had she told him her husband would not like it if he came? She was torn between longing to see him, and a rising fear of Frederick, who had killed another of his dogs. He watched her increasingly. She could never be sure that he had gone, and had several times caught him hidden near the cabin.

"Ah, Bob," she said one day when the cat allowed her to stroke his fur with inactive boredom, "why is it that you cannot speak an' tell me one little good which mus' be in my husban'? I do so want to be a good wife, but how is it possible when he is like—not a beautiful tiger as I think, but a mean wolf? Come tell me that small good which you know. It is so terrible to hate as I hate heem."

It was particularly hard, because it deprived her of her one safety-valve—speech. However unresponsive, he had at least understood her words and had occasionally put in a monosyllable to show that he heard.

One evening he came in with the peculiar glint in his eyes which meant, she knew, that he was pleased with himself.

" 'Low I'll go to the Gulch tomorrow fur more supplies 'g'inst a long winter. I'm startin' at sunrise. Pack grub fur two of us."

On two previous trips he had refused to take her, saying she would be in the way.

"The sky it look so ugly," she protested. "If the bleezard should coom!"

He made no answer, but she knew she would go, and that the reason for her going was the man across the creek.

Sunny Gulch, adding nothing to its population since Annette's marriage, had, however, added to its silent men. Several who had been noisiest at her wedding were now within the frozen walls. She thought of Balzac's story of the man walled in to die of starvation.

She was pleased to find that Miles had not gone. He talked to her, telling her all about Old Mack's love for the pretty Creole, who, hating the country, flogged by her husband, had yet held to her marriage vows till she became herself a clod.

"But Mack stood by waiting to help if she should ask it. I don't believe she ever changed to him. Love is a funny thing. Anyhow she seemed to wake up the day you came. Talked to me—said there might be women born out here with souls to fit the country but that nothing delicate could live here, and that it was a greater sin to let the soul die than the body. By the way, she gave me a message for you, in case you ever came to the Gulch."

"Oh, what was it?"

"She said: 'Tell Mrs. Thorn, *Soune qui peut sans peur et sans reproche.*' Maybe you know what she meant."

"Yes, I know, but it is impossible for me. An' you, is it that your adventure will soon be ovair an' you will go home?" she asked wistfully.

"No, it's just about to begin. I'm trying to get deputized to help hunt the murderer of a poor half-cracked Englishman who came over to find gold he had dreamed of. Had a diagram of the place. Better off dead. But it's murder just the same."

"Meester Estes of the Mounted Police told us of him," said Annette sadly. "When was he keel?"

"Last week. The wolves had made short work of him but he was identified by pieces of his clothes and his paraphernalia."

"But if the wolves—ate him, how can one know they did not keel heem?"

"Trail found leading from the scene of the crime. The murderer, no doubt afraid of his tracks being seen, had cut off a pine brush to sweep them out as he went along. dragged it after him to a creek. There, of course, the trail ended. But it acquitted the wolves."

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"How horrible!"

"The police have nothing to say, but the men around here believe it's the same man who killed the old trapper last fall. Pockets full of money, so it wasn't robbery. Just blood lust. World's full of it since the war. Men don't think so much of the lives of their fellow men any more. Guess the whole world's got a touch of shell shock."

"But why should any one weesh to keel a poor madman?"

"Why should any one care to kill a poor old harmless trapper? You heard about that, didn't you?"

She nodded. "Many time as I coom out. Again from Mr. Estes."

"And the only clue is the strange fashion of the killing. There was a deep hole in his throat as if some beast had taken a bite out of it. It had been done with a sharp knife."

A hole in the throat like a bite! The room turned black. There was a rush of swift water in Annette's ears. She thought she was fainting. She must not faint. The light returned. It was not, however, the unkempt room of the inn which she saw; but a snowclad hillside. A bear kicking on the ground. The gleam of a knife. And Frederick holding a handful of fur and dripping flesh. A great hole in the bear's throat like—a bite taken by some savage beast!

Now a hand grasped her arm. She was being led away. She heard Miles's cheery voice saying good-by. She tried to reply; but her tongue felt thick and sticky. Frederick was hustling her onto the loaded dog cart.

"We got to make tracks," he said. "They's a blizzard brewin'."

Lashing, swearing at the dogs, he kept them at a killing pace till dark. They pitched camp for supper and waited for the moon. When it rose, they started again, traveling half the night.

When the moon went under they stopped for the night and she fell instantly asleep, to be awakened almost immediately, as it seemed, by Frederick. The sky was darkly gray in the east. It was a deep wine color by the time breakfast was ready and the dogs hitched; yet the trail was scarcely discernible when they started. The sun came out, then disappeared suddenly. The clouds were taupe-colored and hung very low. The dogs were excited and needed no whip, no urging to keep them straining forward to their utmost.

Annette relieved them all she could by walking and sometimes running, but they went ahead so fast that Frederick would have to come back for her. He never stopped the dogs but would carry her, as if she were a child in arms.

The blizzard broke when they were within a few hundred yards of the cabin. Frederick put her on the sled, entrusting her to the dogs. Then he was lost to sight. The dogs were lost. They were too busy fighting their way through the blinding smother to waste breath in barking and bickering as usual among themselves. Only the sled moving silently forward told that they were there. Once she heard Frederick call out sharply. He seemed a long way off. She answered. He called again—nearer. He had got away from the sled and turned around, no doubt going from, instead of toward the cabin. She kept calling till he answered beside the sled.

The dogs stopped. Nothing of the cabin was in sight. Then she heard a fumbling sound as of some one feeling along a wall, the creak of hinges very near on her left. Frederick lifted her from the sled and taking one step deposited her inside her cabin. The sure instinct of the dogs had led them to the door while Frederick would have been lost within a few yards of it.

Snow fell day on end. Drifts piled against the rocks and trees, closing in around the cabin. And Frederick sat inside, eating, sleeping, never speaking, until Annette felt she must surely go mad. She could no longer so much as make out that comforting line of smoke. Sick with dread, she wondered if Warrick had gone away before the blizzard came.

The shocking parallel between the murder of the trapper and the killing of the bear fretted her mind. She strove to keep them down, but the inactivity enforced by the blizzard worked against her.

She began to pray for death.

WHEN at last the snow stopped falling, Frederick dug the cabin out. A marble-like moat walled it in. A marble world spread away in every direction. The trees miraculously shortened, their burdened limbs almost touching the high snow

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gave forth grievous explosions. As soon as she could get out, Annette climbed to the top of her moat, her eyes going fearfully toward the sky-line beyond the ghostly creek.

"Yep, he's still there." Frederick spoke at her side. He was looking down at her, his eyes like hard bits of agate.

Annette went into the cabin without speaking, suddenly afraid of him. He had no need of revealing words, nor of reason. He arrived intuitively at what was hidden in another's thought.

When the weather permitted, he spent the days on the snow-fields, always bringing in fresh meats for their use, and furs for the spring trade. And on these days Annette would brave the stabbing breath of the North by the hour for the sheer joy of greeting the first friendly sign of Warrick's return from the hunt. But such days were few. For the most part the snow sifted down in merciless rhythm, permitting no crust to form on which a man might trust his weight. The sky was dark, and wind whistled down the cañons disconsolate and menacing. The occasional sun gave no warmth. And except for the flash of the wolf-packs, no life appeared on the white desolation; except for their wild yell of famine madness, no voice disturbed the eternity of the hours.

As the months crawled on Annette began to be more afraid of herself than of Frederick. Coming out of long periods of abstraction, she would realize, with horror, that she had been occupied with the thought of killing her husband. Relentlessness and treachery were gathering her into a tightening net.

On a day in late March when Frederick had mushed away to the traps, Annette in a fever of hurry started toward the creek. She had no plan, but to see her friend once more before the big thaw, when he would return to his beautiful country. One little hour of joyous conversation, and then—timeless Silence.

Upon reaching the creek, she was appalled by the jungle which enclosed her. In the open spaces one could see; but here, undreamed dangers lurked. Her snowshoes gave out sinister whisperings. The snow-laden trees snapped and cracked like live things on the hiss of the wind. She paused, half minded to turn back when suddenly a cacophony of savage sound shattered the solitudes. It was the hunting yell of the wolf-pack when its quarry is in sight. With a scream she started to run. Her shoes hindered her. Snow sifted from tree limbs in blinding showers. She was paralyzed by a crashing in the brush at her back. Something was charging after her.

"Annette!"

At the sound of Warrick's voice she dropped in the snow and began to sob. He ran to her side and raised her. "Oh, you poor little girl! The beasts are a good mile away, on that ridge." He pointed to a spruce-covered hill towering above the creek. "Just above us. That's why they sound so close. Please don't cry, Mrs. Thorn."

AS HE addressed her by her husband's name it came to her in thrilling recollection that he had in his first excitement called her "Annette." "I am so seely to cry when it is you, my frien', but why you call me Annette at firs' an' not now?"

His eyes shifted. "I always call you Annette in my mind," he said in a low voice.

"An' I am in your min', yet you do not come to see me when I am so lonely an' weesh so to see you, my frien'. Do you not also weesh to see me?"

"Yes, I wished to see you."

"Then why you do not come?"

"As you said—that day—one can't help it if the desire comes; but one can close the door of the heart on desire."

She smiled joyously, her lovely eyes still heavy with tears. "Ah, then it is not that you forget your little frien', as I think sometimes?"

"No, I didn't forget." He avoided her eyes.

"Then come, let us sit down on that nice log an' you shall tell me every little thing that has happen to you since I see you so long ago."

He scraped the snow from the log and they sat down on the edge of the frozen creek in the pale winter sunlight and talked.

And she laughed and laughed to make up for all the lost time, as she explained: "Conversazione, it is like bread in France. It is neces-sary to life; but it have no place in thees frozen house. Ah, I mus' not theenk of thees lan' today." She laughed for the sheer joy of his presence, for it was not in

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her nature to let her thoughts of the after-time mar the happiness of the moment.

Warrick, however, was strangely silent.

Presently, she noticed the solemnity of his boyish face. "Are you not happy, my frien'?"

"I am now."

"Then, why is it that you look so gloom?"

"I keep thinking of—tomorrow."

"Ah, tomorrow is God's. He give us only today. My father he say to me: 'Annette, do not worry about the stream which you mus' cross some day, for when that day come, there may be a breedge. An' never turn back. Press on. Enjoy the sun while it shine.' "

"That's the French spirit all right. And, as we say in America, it's horse sense."

"I believe a dog have more sense as a horse," she said gravely, "but perhaps not in America."

She joined in his laughter, delighted, whatever its sudden cause.

He led her on to tell him of her marriage to Frederick.

"He look so gran' an' brave in those uniform an' Croix de Guerre," she said, unconscious of protest in her voice. "An' though I cannot spek his language, I cannot help love heem, I admire heem so." Then in a passionate outburst she gave him the terrible explanation of his bravery which Frederick had given her.

"I don't know what object Thorn had in doing it, but I'm afraid he lied to you about his exploits in the war," said Warrick. "I know his record and he was all there."

"You know his record, maybee, but not his reason," she replied with a sigh.

"The point is that he was over draft age when the war broke. He was in Seattle, and he sailed for France almost before the British had begun mobilizing."

SHE stared at him in amazement. "Then it is not true as he say that he fight like wolf because he have to, for his life. He went at once to help when he might not have gone at all." She pondered this. Presently a hideous thought crossed her mind. "Do you think some mens went because they love to keel?" she asked fearfully.

Warrick studied her face as if trying to read something there. "I doubt that. Though I think there are men killing one another now because of an acquired appetite for killing. What made you think of that?"

"I do not know. It jus' cross my min'. Ah, it is all so sad—thees worl'! An' the fault, who shall say whose it is? A small duke in a small country he have been keel, a thing which is against the law of all lan'. An' because of this thing of which I know nothing all men to make it right mus' go out an' keel one another. Leetle children they have die for bread; women they have leave home. Because of thees leetle duke I am come from my beautiful lan' to a great prison house. Because of it men have become in the min' like wil' beasts."

They fell silent. Presently he spoke with an abruptness that startled her. "Mrs. Thorn, what are you afraid of?"

"I afraid? Oh, *non*."

"Just now I distinctly saw fear in your eyes."

She wanted to tell him of the devastating fear that had been in her mind all winter. But something held her back. Frederick was her husband. She owed him a duty. Even if she knew—but after all it was only a suspicion. And suspicion was in the air of this land of wild beasts. The hole in the bear's throat— It was a coincidence, no more. Perhaps it was the usual method of killing bears. And this murderer had used the same method on a man.

"Fear is always in my heart in this lan'," she replied slowly. "I am terrified of everything. I am suspicion. It is not I who am so but all thees." With both arms she indicated the ice-locked immensity around them. "It overwhelm me an' mek me mos' small an' mean."

"You make me feel very small and mean," he said glumly.

"But why?"

"I'll tell you sometime, perhaps. Or if I don't some one else will," he spoke gravely.

"You yourself mus' tell me or I shall not hear. No one will coom to tell me. An' I will not leesten if they try to tell me my frien' is small an' mean."

When it was time for her to go, he walked with her to the top of the hill. "Let us say '*Au revoir*' here. But you will not go away to your beautiful Cal'fornia without coom to say good-by to me?"

Her hand was still in his when, impelled by a common impulse, they looked around.

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Frederick stood watching them from across the clearing, an impenetrable look in his yellow eyes. It was evident that he thought he had stumbled on a lovers' tryst. They stood in uncomfortable silence for a few minutes, then Annette started homeward, followed a few paces behind by Frederick.

In spite of the feeling of defiance which had replaced her old submissiveness, she wished all evening that he would refer to the encounter of the afternoon so she could explain it. But though she knew it was uppermost in his thoughts, he said nothing. His readiness in going to sleep was therefore the more menacing. It was as if, having already decided upon what he would do in such an event, there was nothing to consider nor to speak about. And if he had deliberately planned his course, Annette could not doubt his cruelty.

Once, impelled by that hideous fascination one feels toward loathsome things, she got up and went to the side of his bed and looked down at him. He opened his eyes instantly. His enigmatic gaze rested on her; he was wide awake, watchful.

Neither spoke. She went back to the fire. "I couldn't take him unawares even if I were to go quite mad an' try," she thought. "For which I thank the Holy Mother. Perhaps it will keep me sane, or if it does not, he will keel me, which will be better for my soul. I dare say he means to keel me; but why did he not do so at once?"

She recollected his words: "I'd feed her to the wolves." Her imagination constructed the scene—the terrible snow-wastes—those gaunt gray creatures closing in around her—she felt the terrible pain of their fangs in her quivering flesh.

Dear God, not that! A hatchet lay on the hearth. It fascinated her. She moved away from it shudderingly. She tried to fix her attention on the fire. But her eyes went back to the hatchet. They traveled from it to the bed. She crossed the hearth, picked it up and drew back into the middle of the room.

She put her hand over her mouth to suppress a scream. Bob lay in her line of vision, sleeping as usual with one eye, watching with the other. Shivering as with cold, she took two hasty steps toward the hearth, flung the hatchet into the fire.

With a deep sigh of relief, she turned toward the bed. Frederick was lying on his back, his eyes fixed on her. He turned on his side and was snoring presently. But he was awake every few minutes.

"He and Bob are alike," she whispered. "Sleep always with one eye open for danger."

Frederick was up before dawn, feeding the dogs, hurrying her with breakfast.

AS SOON as it was light Annette went outside. Warrick, too, had evidently not been able to sleep. A black stream of smoke writhed against the pink dawn. She wondered if he was outside, watching the smoke from her chimney. She thought of his words on that first day: "If you ever need me—" But she could not signal him Frederick was strong as an ox. He would but kill them both.

Without seeming to see her Frederick passed her on his way to hitch the dogs. He was preparing for a trip in the woods with them. After breakfast, during which neither of them spoke, he began carrying out bedding, groceries and pots as for a long camp. Annette was so sick that she could scarcely stand, but she managed to wash the dishes.

"Put on your hat an' coat," Frederick said, coming in when the shack was half empty.

"Frederick, where are we going? I am seeck. I cannot go."

"Get your hat an' coat on," he said.

Her terror mounted to panic. She ran to the fire, bent over it a second. What was it she must do? Oh, yes. She snatched a package from a shelf and a blazing stick from the fire and ran outside. Frederick followed her deliberately, arriving at the side of the house just as she sent up a call for help. His big hand closed over her wrist. He gave her a jerk and she lost her balance. Without pausing, he dragged her to the sled and, lifting her roughly, threw her on, and started the dogs.

Hatless, coatless, she huddled under the robes. She had sent up her call. But if he were inside the shack he had not seen. One call. It was most unlikely he had seen. And what could he do if he had? She hoped he had not. Perhaps Frederick did not intend to harm her after all.

They were headed toward the high Selkirks. All day they plowed through softening drifts, pitching tent at sunset on the side of a timbered ridge. Beside it was a cavern. Frederick set a smoke in its mouth

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to bring out any possible animal hiding there, and after a while explored it with a torch.

"Oh, Frederick, where are we going? What do you inten' to do to me?" Annette pleaded, as he rolled up in his blanket before the fire.

"Go to bed," he snapped.

Annette went into the tent to lie awake all night, shivering, praying. She did not get up in the morning when she heard him stirring about.

"I've got the breakfast," he called presently.

"I cannot eat. I am seeck."

"Git up," he commanded. "I'm goin' back to fetch yore coat. I aimed to leave you here an' move on up into the hills. Police would a foun' the tent an' things an' thought we was both et by wolves, but I've changed my mind. I want you. I allow I'll go back fur yore coat an' kill your lover while I'm there. I kin rest easier ef I know he's in the belly of a wolf. You kin stay an' keep thievin' critters away."

"My lover! Oh, Frederick, he is not my lover! I have nevaire seen heem but jus' twice. I nevaire thought of love—" She stopped aghast. She had never thought of love in connection with Warrick, but now that she did think, she knew she had loved him all along. The hot blood flamed in her face and her eyes mirrored the shame, the horror she felt for herself. She got up hastily to cover her emotion.

"You ain't sich a hell of a good liar," Frederick remarked.

"But I nevaire thought of it before. It is you who put it in my min' this minute." She flung her arms around him in an agony of terror. "Ah, my husban', do not go back without me, I am so frighten of those wolves!"

"They won't bother you so long as you keep the fire."

"I will nevaire see heem again," she went on, "an' I will try so hard for love you. He is not my lover, jus' only my frien' whom I have see twice in my life."

"How come you sent him a signal ef he ain't your lover?" he demanded harshly. His arms were rigid at his side, but his heart pounded against her.

"You look so terrible at me when you coom back from the creek an' I know what you think which is not true, but I recollect what you say about feed Mrs. Johnson to the wolves, an' I am mos' mad with fright. He tell me that firs' day I see heem that eef something terrible ever happen when you are away I shall seegnal him. That is all. I swear it on the Holy Cross."

He was looking down at her mouth. Suddenly his arms were around her, his mouth devouring hers. She lay limp, her eyes closed, shudderingly submissive. He pushed her from him. "You're lyin'. How come he knowed to meet you at the creek? Cain't no woman make a fool o' me. Reckon I'll fetch him an' settle hit here where you kin see hit done. An' hit's a day offen the trail." He went calmly about hitching the dogs.

"Take me with you an' settle it at home," she begged.

"Ha! An' have you warn him while I wus on the way 'crost the creek to git him? I allow I'll hog-tie him an' fetch him up here an' jist leave him," he went on, speaking his thoughts aloud for the first time since Annette had known him. "Murder is again' the law fur men," he mused; "for wolves hit's diff'rent. An' they's a sight o' wolves in these parts. That there ash heap'll look es ef he wus campin' an' went to sleep an' let the fire go out." He spoke with cunning brutality. "I aim to leave the tent an' a couple o' blankets an' some pans. I've took lessons from the wolves," he added, turning pridefully to Annette. Whether he announced his plan to torture her, or to clarify it in his own mind, she did not know. But that he was enjoying it was clear.

And now, in spite of her pleadings, her tears, he drove away, leaving her in the wilderness, a tent for shelter, a blanket for a coat, a gun and a pile of wood between her and the famine-mad wolves.

NIGHT drew on. The sun, red as blood on the snow-rimmed western hills, reached bruised fingers into the north where a gray curtain fluttered hesitantly, as if loath to close over a treacherous world.

Never venturing far from camp, Annette had spent the day adding to her store of wood. Frederick knew the ways of the wild and he had said that so long as she kept the fire going she would not be harmed. But she had not slept for two nights; she had had a hard day on the trail, and today, in

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terror of the wood giving out, she had not allowed herself one minute for rest. She had eaten nothing, and mind and body cried out for sleep. The warmth of the fire flowed soothingly over her.

Frederick had not meant the wolves to get her or he would not have left her a gun and wood. But he would surely kill her friend. Why had it not been she? Whatever happened she must keep awake. She could not sleep as he and Bob did, with one eye open. How strange that she had never once thought of what was now so plain—she loved Tom Warrick! She had not meant to. And he—oh, when he would learn! He, of course, had never thought of her in that way. And Frederick's awful plan!

As he had said, this place was a day off the trail. With wolves roaming the hills, the bones of a man might be found and raise no question; while in the valley one must dispose of the body. And there was always a chance that the police would happen to pass before the thaw obliterated traces——

Warrick would never come quietly with Frederick. He would fight, and if both of them were killed she would be left here to die. . . .

Dark descended in soft smothering folds. Beyond the jungle walls, the turbulent life of the wilderness moved in slinking ferocity. Her eyes drooped. . . . She woke with a start. Yellow eyes gleamed at her now and again out of the brush.

"Go way!" she shouted over and over, making the woods ring. Sometimes a scurrying movement answered her. Again her body would sag forward.

Terrified, she got up and began walking round and round the fire. Once she went to sleep on her feet. A cold perspiration broke out on her. She washed her face vigorously in snow. To keep awake—for what end she did not consider—but to keep awake, filled her consciousness. When she could no longer walk, she got down on her knees and crawled. Round and round. Round and round. . . .

A crackling sound came to her. She was hunched over, her forehead on the ground. Frantically she sprang up; piled on wood till the fire became a conflagration. The hours dragged on—agonizing, never ending.

After an eternity a pale pink pushed up in the east. Day! Blessed day! She felt suddenly hungry and hacking off a slice of venison, prepared her breakfast. As she finished eating, her body sank gently backward. . . .

AWAKENED by a rending sound, she sprang up. The sun was midway in the sky. A furtive line of smoke struggled up from an ash heap where the fire had been. Had that frenzied yell been a dream?

It came again! A wild, triumphant clamor, leaping from crag to crag, recoiling down the tree-lanes and filling the world.

Shaking so that she could scarcely keep on her feet, Annette dug into the embers, bringing up a bed of coals. Again that yell. Nearer! She piled on wood, got on her knees and blew on the coals with all her strength. The wood caught in deliberate little spurts. Flickered out. She scrambled up, threw on a pan of fat and the blaze leaped up. Higher. Higher. And now only the crackling of the logs, the leap of the flames, broke the stillness.

Presently she heard the yapping of the dogs on the trail. Ah, thank God! Whatever Frederick's coming might bring, it meant a respite from this present horror. He was making the trip in a little better than a day and a half. Doubtless he had traveled in the night, the cabin being a good two days away, there and back. When he came in sight she ran to meet him, dizzied by fear. He was alone, tramping ahead of the dogs. Had he after all risked killing her friend in the valley? She had hoped he might overcome him and bring him here tied, but alive. She had hidden a knife in her belt to cut his bonds at the first chance.

"Where is he?" she demanded. "Have you already keel heem? The police they will fin' heem an' follow you," she cried hysterically as if hoping thus by pointing out his error to make him undo it.

"I ain't seen him. I changed my mind. Come on he'p me load the sled quick."

He began breaking camp, throwing things helter-skelter on the sled. Yet, in spite of his hurry, he took time to make some curious arrangements about the mouth of the cavern, tramping the snow down in a wide circle, setting a bucket at one side of the entrance, and hanging a piece of meat on the opposite side. Then he set the tent near, scattered tins about to look as if they had been carelessly thrown from within the cave, and moved the fire nearer. After

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which he threw a couple of blankets on the ground inside the tent, finally pausing to note the effect of human habitation. All was done swiftly without a lost motion. And now, all his haste apparently gone, he cunningly concealed a deadfall among the brush growing out of the sides and top of the cavern's mouth.

"What is it you are doing, Frederick?" Annette, her relief so tremendous that it sickened her, had watched him in silence.

"I 'low your lover'll be comin' thisaway purty soon. He'd been to the shack an'll be trailin' us out here fore long. This 'ere's less trouble than fetchin' him out."

"Oh!" sobbed Annette. "You have feex up so when he do not fin' us in the tent he weel go into the cavern an' that thing will fall on heem— Oh, Frederick, but it will be murder! You cannot do that. A man cannot murder another one without cause an' sleep on it. Do you not know thees?"

"Ef you're meanin' my conscience'll bother me," said Frederick slowly, "I been in the murderin' business fur sever'l years in Europe an' my conscience ain't bothered me none; an' them fellers I murdered hadn't done nothin' 'tall to me. I allow I kin sleep better knowin' that coyote's in the belly o' the wolves, then thet he's sneakin' roun' meetin' my wife and makin' love to her."

There was unspeakable loathing and fear in her face. And something more. A gallant spirit looked out of her eyes. "I weel not go away from here till you tak that thing away."

For answer he picked her up, threw her on the sled and started the dogs.

"Put your hands up, Thorn." An imperative voice cut across the silence. No one was in sight. But Frederick obediently lifted his hands. There was a snapping in the brush and Tom Warrick stepped out into the open.

"I wish there were some more original way of telling a man to get his hands out of the way of his gun," said the young man, "but I don't know any that is snappier."

Annette stared at him in bewilderment. He did not, however, glance at her, but was walking rapidly toward Frederick, a revolver in one hand, a pair of handcuffs in the other. His breath came heavily, as if he had been running. "Had to leave my horse down the trail so you wouldn't hear me coming," he explained pleasantly. "Sorry I missed you at your cabin. You see I didn't expect you to come back once you'd got away, and I'd gone over the creek for my horse. I'd already lost a whole day trailing you through the hills on foot." He was now approaching more warily.

"Damn bloodhound!" Frederick's eyes were murderous. "Whut am I wanted fur?"

"First for brutally murdering Outkelt, the trapper, last fall; second for murdering that poor shell-shocked Englishman in the spring——"

"HIT'S a lie! Warn't nothin' to show who kilt 'em. Hit's a frame. Hit ain't no evidence at all ag'in' nobody."

"It wasn't until you made the mistake of murdering Estes four days ago. That was a great mistake, Thorn, because you had to go home, or thought you had to, and naturally your tracks led like a trail of blood from the body, roundabout, I admit, but, certainly, to your cabin. I've been watching you a long time for just such a blunder. Estes said you were bound to repeat yourself, poor chap."

"I shot Estes accidentally; thought he was a moose."

"Not unreasonable, and you might have convinced the courts—accidents do happen—if you could have resisted your seal. But I'm afraid it won't do. You didn't think he was a moose when you took that slice out of his throat."

Annette had climbed off the cart and now stood frozen, her amazed and horrified eyes going from one to the other. Warrick was within a few feet of his prisoner, smiling, debonair, yet clearly expecting attack.

"Unfortunately I was afoot when I chanced on Estes' body. I'd have saved time by going back for my horse but I never dreamed you'd be so foolish as to walk so many miles out of your way. Didn't you know no matter how far you went, your tracks would follow? Bad business to commit murder just after a light snow."

"All hell couldn't got me ef I'd a got beyond the Bijou," snarled Frederick. "Howsomever, I couldn't go no ways 'thout knowin' you wus in the belly of a wolf. I went back to git you, but when I found your tracks roun' the shack an' see how they'd followed me in from the hills, I know'd you wus a bloodhoun', an' arter

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me more'n my wife." His habit of silence had been shattered by his failure, or he had an object in talking.

ANNETTE'S knees gave under her. With a little moan she slid down in the snow. It was true. She had known it for a long time but had refused to believe it, and her friend was of the Mounted Police, masquerading in citizen's clothes and set to watch Frederick. He had lied about coming from California. He had lied about being here to recover from the war.

"Mrs. Thorn," said Warrick, "this is why I said it made me feel small and mean to have you call me your friend." His eyes shifted from Frederick for an instant and in that instant Frederick was upon him. His gun flew into the brush.

"Hit's allus when a man gits soft fur a woman he gits tripped," snarled Frederick.

Warrick succeeded in drawing again; but Frederick gave his arm a twist and the second gun dropped at their feet. Frederick stooped for it, but was tripped by the deft foot of the younger man. They went down together, each striving for the gun, struggling to prevent the other from reaching it, Warrick still holding the handcuffs, straining to close them over Thorn's wrists.

With a little cry Annette rushed in, snatched up the gun and held it, uncertain what to do with it, now that she had kept Frederick from getting it. She had no wish to give it to him certainly, and she could not give it to Warrick, even if she wished. Frederick would see to that. Besides, hideous as the thought was, she was Frederick's wife, and could not hand any one a gun with which to kill him, however much he deserved it.

Both men were unarmed. The handcuffs lay at a safe distance. Frederick's rifle was on the sled, and they could not kill each other with bare hands. She thought of trying to check the fight by threatening to shoot; but she knew that would not stop Frederick. They were rolling together on the ground in terrible embrace, each now and then freeing an arm to deliver a vicious blow. The young officer, tall and lithe, appeared small beside the immense frame of his antagonist.

Quite suddenly that old compelling urge to kill Frederick seized Annette. She began to shake as with a violent chill, and went stumbling toward the men, her feet carrying her forward almost against her will. Thorn lurched sideways; just as Annette raised her weapon she saw that Warrick had been brought into line with it. The sight sobered her; with a cry of horror she flung the gun away.

Swaying, struggling desperately, each afraid to loose his grip lest the other, in the first moment of freedom, should gain the upper hand, the two men got to their feet. The dogs were wild; they were barking furiously, and striving desperately to get free.

Now Thorn, loosing one hand, contrived a blow. His fist reached Warrick's chin; staggered him; compelled him, for the moment, to let go. And on the instant Frederick's knife was out and he thrust for Warrick's heart. But Warrick was alert; he stepped aside, and catching Thorn off balance, sent home a telling blow to the jaw.

Now they crouched, eying one another like wary animals. Each knew the other's strength now; each realized that life and death hung upon the issue of a moment.

"I'm—going—to—get—you!" said Warrick, his breath coming in great gasps. "I'm through—then—but, by God—I'll make this country safe from a man who kills like a wolf——"

Once more a thrill of sheer horror ran through Annette. Like a wolf! That was what it was—the murderous, lustful light she had seen in Frederick's eyes—the passionate eagerness with which he had mutilated the throat of the dead bear. God in heaven—what this mad country did to those it caught and held!

Breathless, she watched the two men. The sun gleamed on their knives as they circled about, seeking an opening. Warrick was the cooler of the two; he waited, contenting himself with eluding Frederick's occasional savage rushes, laughing as he stepped safely away from the thrust of the long knife. Only once he struck—ripped Thorn's sleeve, that time, from shoulder to wrist, grazing the flesh so that blood stained the snow.

"I—don't want to kill you," said Warrick. "Thorn—don't make me! Man—give up! There are places for men like you——"

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SLOWLY there came to Annette some realization of Warrick's courage. He might have shot Thorn from ambush—and would not. She knew, now, what Warrick, too, must know—that Thorn was mad, as dangerous, as irrational, as an infuriated wild beast at bay. Yet he would not kill him unless he must. And she knew why. Knew, at last, and gloried in knowing, that this was her lover—who, because of that, would not take the life of the man to whom she was bound!

Suddenly, as he stepped away from one of Thorn's rushes, Warrick's foot slipped. He recovered swiftly—but the momentary break had given Thorn his chance. His huge bulk struck the slighter man; Warrick's knife spun away. Thorn screamed in savage triumph.

"Got you!" he yelled. His knife was raised; flashed down. But Warrick fell away from it; as he went down his feet gripped Thorn's leg, and Frederick went crashing down, backward. Warrick was free in an instant; with a great leap he sprang for the other, his hands reaching desperately for the knife. But here Thorn's enormous strength was too great for Warrick's skill to overcome; at close quarters he was hopelessly outmatched.

All he could do was to hold his own; to grip Thorn's hand so that the deadly knife could not reach him. Both men were torn and cut as they rolled in the snow; each was losing, swiftly, all semblance of humanity. Each was coming close to exhaustion. Yet they fought on.

Suddenly Annette saw that Thorn was changing his tactics. He seemed to be weakening—yet she knew that he was not. In his eyes, as, from time to time, she could see them, she saw a cunning, ferocious look. And gradually, as she saw them rolling nearer and nearer to the cavern, she understood. The deadfall! Thorn had meant to trap Warrick there—even now, if he could contrive it, the trap might serve its purpose.

She screamed out a warning as she realized the truth.

"The cave—don't let him get you there—a trap!" she cried.

Thorn wrenched free as she cried out. For once he didn't use his knife; but aimed a great blow with his left. Warrick swayed; it seemed that the blow must reach his shoulder, send him down. But at the last moment he ducked; his hands seized the huge wrist as it shot over him. With a curious, twisting movement, a trick of jiu-jitsu such as Annette had never seen, he made himself master of the other. There was a moment of straining effort; then Thorn, carried by the momentum of his own rush, was flung over Warrick's head, straight into the cave.

He screamed hideously as the deadfall caught him; the next moment he was groaning in agony. Both legs were crushed; the fight was over.

Warrick straightened up. For a minute he could not see; a sick dizziness assailed him; he came near to fainting. Then he took a swaying step toward Thorn, stooping for the knife.

"God—you're a man," he said. His voice broke. "Why—oh, why did you have to go—like—this?"

Annette screamed suddenly. Too late Warrick reached for the knife. Thorn had it; slashed viciously at his own throat. The blood spurted out.

"Nette!" Thorn's voice, gurgling, terrible, called her. Torn with pity, all her remembered love for him welling up, she flung herself down beside him. "I—did—love you. God knows—mad—like a wolf—killed every one—not you——"

His voice died away.

"Oh, my poor Frederick!" she sobbed. "I have once love you very dear—an' thees terribl' heart—it is the fault of thees country an' of the good God that he make such a mos' cruel lan'!"

"He—he's gone, Annette," said Warrick. "He—he was a very gallant soldier, Annette. I think—the war—and this country—made him mad. He will be judged by One with greater understanding than our law."

She stood up and faced him.

"Can you forgive me, Annette?" he said. "I didn't know, when I set out to follow him, that he was your husband. I knew this country—only poor Estes knew it so well. It seemed my duty."

Very simply, like a tired, worn child, she held out her hands to him.

"I do not know," she said. "Maybe it was a great sin, I mek sure—but I could not help it if in my heart I have loved you long time."

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Pat matched his wits with Vassall; sought to do, constantly, the unexpected thing.

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Yellow

The Spirit in Which a Man Plays a Game Is Not Always Manifest in the Results That He Achieves

By William Almon Wolff

Illustration by H. T. Fisk

PAT TREDWAY hadn't particularly wanted to accept his invitation to the house party the Fleetwoods were giving for the Davis Cup matches, but he hadn't known exactly how to refuse. One reason, of course, which he wasn't keen about admitting to himself, was that Trudy Warriner was to be there, and chances to be with her, or even to see her, were not lightly to be thrown away.

But at dinner things moved in a way to make him sorry, even so, that he'd come. It wasn't only Jimmy Fleetwood's sudden liberality with his precious pre-war stuff, and the mellowing effect that had on the crowd; everything went wrong, grated.

There was talk about tennis, naturally, and the matches that were to begin next day, and that, for Pat, was pretty hard to bear. Every once in a while, too, people remembered, and pointedly changed the subject; realized that it wasn't, somehow, quite the thing to talk so before him, who wasn't going to play.

For he wasn't; every one knew that, definitely, now; knew that his selection as a member of the defending team, which had roused so much enthusiasm when it was announced, among thousands of followers of the game, who had believed for a long time that he was not getting a square deal, had been the emptiest of gestures—a sop to the crowd. All he could do for the next three days would be to sit on the clubhouse porch at Forest Hills and watch the play—watch Ted Morgan, whom he had beaten time and again, play the two singles matches in which he should, by right and justice, have had his chance.

It was the way the thing had been done that rankled so. To wait so long—and then, at the last moment, throw him over! It had been bad enough the year before, when his name had been passed over altogether. They hadn't dared to do that this year—to go quite so far. His record had forced their hands to that extent. But still they had done this!

He couldn't stand the crowd after dinner. It had turned cool, suddenly, after a day of blistering heat, and every one was full of energy. The latest thing in electrically driven pianos was dispensing the most expensive of canned jazz; some one was inspired, presently, to rummage the attic for stuff for costumes and make a real party. And so Pat, watching his chance, slipped out on the veranda; found a chair in a dark spot; sat down, looking out over the ocean, watching a light, far away, that flashed white, and red, and white again.

As he sat, alone, he turned over and over in his mind all that had, in the last two or three years, led up to this climax of humiliation. Nothing, it seemed to him, had happened as he had dreamed it would—as he had pictured it through the long years abroad, while he had looked forward, longingly, to the time when he should recover his birthright, come home to the America he had loved with the amazing passion known only to an expatriated boy.

He had never played in tournaments abroad; had been too young to do so. There he had learned tennis, though;

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learned it through years of practice, of play with and against the best professionals and teachers.

There was something, it seemed to him, curiously and subtly different about the way they approached the game, over there. There was lacking, there, a certain humorless fierceness that marked the men with whom he had been thrown at home, since his return. There was more—yes, fun was the word. It was better fun to play tennis, over there. They loved the game more for its own sake, less because of the chance it gave for triumph, for some desperate proof of skill and strength.

He could remember, vividly, one time at Wimbledon when, with his father, he had watched a great player losing to a tricky, shifty one—a man who had developed to an uncanny point the ability to drop a spinning, twisting ball just over the net. It had seemed to him that the great player was wrong to meet that game as he did; to refuse to abandon his own style and pay the other in his own coin.

"NO, PAT," his father had said. "He's got to stick to his own game—he can't care what happens to-day. It's like—oh, sometimes, when you're in a tight place, you could get out of it, just for the minute, by telling a lie, couldn't you? And you don't. You know it wouldn't really pay, for one thing. You tell the truth and take your licking if it comes, don't you?"

Youngster though he had been, Pat had seen the point, and he had always remembered that—and the way the ranking player, though beaten that day, had, later, taken his revenge; how, knowing what to expect, he had, the next time he met his conqueror, dazzled him by sheer speed, made his tricks, his evasions, look as ridiculous as they were impotent.

Yet, here at home, it seemed to Pat now, they would have sided against his father. They would have praised the game that won, no matter how the victory was achieved. They regarded victory as the supreme, the final, the only test of merit. They had turned against him because, with him, that was not so; because, in his eyes, the game, the play itself, was the great thing.

The sound of some one coming around the corner of the house roused him; angered him. Lord! Couldn't they leave him alone? He sat still, hoping he would not be noticed. His eyes peered through the darkness. And then he saw that it was a woman who came, all in white, and, an instant later, caught his breath. Trudy!

"Hello!" she said. "Who's that?"

Then, as he rose, she knew him.

"Oh—you, Pat? Did you cut and run, too? I hate these married crowds. They always get rough, and it's such a strain, remembering what a young girl isn't supposed to understand!"

"Yes?" he said. "I see—it must be——"

"Oh, no, you don't!" she said, cheerfully. "You don't see at all. You're an awful dumbbell, Pat—but I'm rather glad you are! It's a change, anyway. You're sort of funny and old-fashioned, aren't you?"

She swung herself up to sit on the rail of the veranda, so that she looked down toward him when he dropped into his chair again.

"I don't know that I am," he said, stiffly.

"Well, take it from me—you are! I don't know why they asked me to this show. I'm bored to death. Of course, after to-morrow there'll be the tennis——"

She must have felt the way he winced.

"You didn't seem to be bored at dinner," he said, after a moment.

"I always said I was a good actress! Bored! When I had to pretend to be interested in all the reasons Steve Bennett has for thinking he's in love with Enid—which he isn't! You'd never even think you were in love with a married woman, would you, Pat?"

"I'm in love with you, Trudy," he said.

"Oh, so you are! Stop it, Pat—turn it off! I don't want any one to be in love with me to-night!"

"Sorry! I'll clear out——"

"Sit down, Pat! Don't be so—thick! I want to talk. Not about that, though. You think you've had an awfully raw deal, don't you?"

"I—yes, I suppose I do. I have——"

"You're wrong. They couldn't do anything but what they did. Look here, Pat—you might just as well have this out. You've got to see that it's your own fault this has happened, somehow. Or else—well, you might as well go back and spend the rest of your life hanging around in Europe—until there's another war. You——"

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"I can't see——"

"Don't I know you can't? But, Pat—this is a show-down for you. You've got to stand up to this. You—well, you haven't got any of the things you want, have you? Playing on the team—making good here at home—getting—well—me?"

"You!" he said. "I—you're not in this—I'd rather leave you out of all that, Trudy——"

"Oh, Pat—you can't! Oh, I know I said I didn't want to talk about your—loving me. But we've got to. It's all mixed up together. Why do you suppose I—turned you down?"

"Why——" He stood up to consider that. "Why—I suppose—you didn't care, Trudy dear. I haven't any right to ask you why——"

"But you have! Oh, Pat—you haven't any right not to! You ought to drag it out of me! You're—you're such a fool!"

He stared at her, hurt, half angry.

"CARE!" she said. "Pat——" Something in her voice in that moment thrilled him as he had never, in all his life, been thrilled. "Oh, Pat! You said the—the other night—that you loved me the very first minute you ever saw me—that you knew, then. I know you did, Pat—I knew it then. And if—if you'd taken me in your arms, then—that night—I'd have——"

"Trudy!" His voice rang out, wildly exultant.

She put his arms away as, hungrily, they sought to draw her to him.

"No," she said. "Pat—you've got to listen. You've got to try to understand. I—yes, I care for you. I never dreamed I'd care so much for any one. I know there's never going to be any one else—like you. And—I couldn't marry you now if I knew not doing it would make me just crawl away and die for wanting you."

He turned away for a moment, then he came back to her.

"Yes," he said. "I've got to try to understand that, Trudy."

"It's because—because I can't trust you—can't depend on you——" She saw how he shrank away from her. "Oh, Pat—I know how that sounds! You don't think I like hurting you, do you? But you've got to hear it—because it's so. And, Pat, it's—it's the same thing that made them leave you out to-morrow——"

He exclaimed sharply, but she paid no attention to him.

"I—Pat—I love you. I do. I can tell you that, because it can't change anything—just by itself. Not now. I'm crazy about you. I have been—oh, for ages! And they feel—oh, something like that about your tennis. They know what a wonder you are. Every one thought you were going to be champion, when you first came home. No one would be a bit surprised, even now, if you beat Bill Ransome at Philadelphia—if you were champion this year. They know you're better than Ted Morgan—but when they had to have some one to count on, when there had to be some one who could go absolutely the limit to win one match from the Englishmen—they picked Ted and left you out. And I—I know they were right——

"Because I'd have to do the same thing, Pat. I—sometime, I might marry some one else. But I'd still—love you—and not marry you, because I'd know I couldn't depend on you for what I'd have to have when I was married——"

She stopped.

"Trudy!" he said. His voice was shaken. "Oh, Trudy! What is it? Dear—can you make me see? I—I've got this far—just listening so far—I can see there must be something. But what—what is it?"

"It's frightfully hard to say, Pat. I—I'm not sure I know myself. I—just sort of feel it, I think. Sometimes I think I know—and then it's gone again. It—it seems to be a lot of little things—that don't amount to anything, by themselves—they just pile up. There was one thing I heard Ted Morgan say—after he'd beaten you, that time at Southampton. Some one congratulated him, and he laughed, and said beating you didn't mean anything—that there wasn't any satisfaction in it, because you always built up an alibi as you went along in a losing match——"

"But—Trudy—that's the most poisonous rot! I——"

"Wait a minute, Pat. I didn't see just what he meant at first, and I asked him. And he said you made him feel that winning made so little difference to you that losing didn't matter, either. And he said that wasn't fair. And he said the worst of

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it was that if he said what he meant was that you just played for the sake of playing it sounded as if he were knocking you for being an awfully good sport—and that you really weren't, at all."

"It—Trudy, it just sounds silly, to me——"

"I know, but it isn't! Listen—it's like this. When you're playing a match with any one, especially if they're better than you are, you like to feel, if you do happen to beat him, that it was worth while—that he was doing his absolute best to keep you from winning. And Ted meant—he didn't feel that way with you. That you sort of made it seem you could try harder, but you didn't care—it wasn't worth while—you wouldn't give up playing your own way to win——"

"I don't think I would!" said Pat. "I don't think one should."

"Yes—and—you're almost right, Pat! But you're wrong, too, somehow. Because—oh—the men we think most of—the men like Bill Ransome and McLoughlin—they care more about winning than anything on earth—while they're playing! Once they're beaten they can laugh—they can realize then that it doesn't matter so much—that the world's going on just the same. But they can't feel so while there's still a chance for them to keep from being beaten—while the last point hasn't been made against them! That's the difference, Pat."

She had really shaken him at last.

"I—I'd never thought of it just that way," he said, doubtfully. "I don't know—there may be something in that, Trudy. You see—I've always been taught not to think at all about winning or losing—not to care——"

"BUT you do care!" she insisted. "That's just the trouble. You and all the men who are like you do care—you care so much you won't admit to yourselves that you do. That's where you're not honest, Pat. You're afraid to let any one know how much you really care. So you act as if you didn't. You won't go easy when your drive goes wrong and every ball goes out—you won't make sure of your second serve when you've made a fault first time——"

His lips grew tight.

"I can't play that way——"

"You could if you thought you had to! If you could ever feel that winning some match was the most important thing there was ever going to be in your whole life——"

"Ye-es," he said, slowly. "I suppose I might, then——"

"Well, then—— Oh, Pat—I don't suppose I can help, really. You've got to work it out by yourself. But I wanted you to know—not just sulk and think people weren't being fair to you."

"I know," he said. "Trudy—I'm going to try mighty hard to see it the way you do—to see if you're right."

She slipped down from the rail.

"I'm tired," she said. "I'm just going on up to bed. Good night, Pat."

She gave him her hand, and suddenly as he held it, the touch of her fingers carried him away, and he took her in his arms, and held her close, his lips hovering over hers. But then he freed her without kissing her.

"Oh, Trudy!" he said. "My dear—I don't know how—but I'm going to make you trust me; I'm going to have what's mine——"

"Ah!" she said. "You shall have it, if it's yours; there's nothing in this world can keep it from you then——"

IT WAS pretty bad, the next day, at Forest Hills. He had to watch the gathering of the great crowd; exchange greetings, every few minutes, with people he knew; watch Morgan and Ransome, while the stands were still just beginning to fill, go out to warm up; forced himself, indeed, to go out and volley with Ransome when Morgan, who was to play first, and was inclined, anyway, to be a little stale, went in.

Trudy made a point of beckoning him to a seat she had saved beside her own on the porch when he came back to watch the play; they sat together while Morgan, rising to the very peak of his steady, unimaginative game, wore MacLagan, the second man on the British team, down in a furious five-set match. For all the crowd that victory meant that the cup was safe for another year. No one doubted for a moment that Ransome would win both his matches; even though the Englishmen won the doubles, as every one expected them to do, Morgan's victory seemed to make the odd match safe.

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But just an hour after Morgan and MacLagan had staggered from the court the whole situation had been transformed by one of the most sensational surprises in the history of the game. For Ransome, playing as well as he had ever done in his life, had been not only beaten, but utterly routed by Vassall, whom he had beaten half a dozen times. He had gone down in straight sets before a man who had suddenly, unaccountably, risen to heights he had never before even given promise of being able to scale.

Trudy, stunned, shocked, like every one else there, turned to Pat.

"What happened?" she asked.

"Nothing. Vassall just saw it through—that's all. He's always played the sort of game that's hardest for Bill to beat; Bill wants you to come up to the net and trade with him. I took two sets from him at Philadelphia last year playing just that way—and then he got me to the net and did me in."

"It—it looks pretty bad, doesn't it, Pat? I mean—we haven't much chance in the doubles, have we?"

"No. I wish Ted were playing with Bill instead of Corthell. And—oh, Lord—I can't see Ted keeping Vassall warm if he plays the way he did just now! Bill 'll beat Mac, of course—but that won't do us any good—it'll be all over by that time."

Trudy said nothing.

"Lord—I wish I had a chance at Vassall!" Pat broke out, suddenly. "I——"

Something in Trudy's eyes stopped him short, and he laughed, mirthlessly, and said nothing more. And that night, his mood having changed, he welcomed the gaiety that still prevailed at the Fleetwood house; flung himself into every enterprise that was proposed; didn't see Trudy alone at all, really. He sat with her again the next day, though; watched, with her, Bill Ransome's heroic but hopeless effort to stem the tide of sure defeat in the doubles. Bill did all that could have been asked of any man, but the British pair was one of the greatest that had ever played together, and the second day's play ended with the challengers leading, two matches to one, and practically certain, now, to carry the trophy home with them. For no one could do more than hope that some miracle would enable Ted Morgan to do what Ransome had failed to do.

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1923

Again, that night, Pat saw little of Trudy. But in the morning, early, they met on the beach; swam far out together; came back, ravenous, to eat their breakfast while most of their fellow guests were still asleep. And afterward they were looking through the papers when a servant came to tell Pat he was wanted on the telephone. There was an extension in the room; Pat used it.

"Hello!" he said. "Yes—Tredway. . . . What's that? . . . Oh, I say—not really! . . . What rotten luck! Tell him I'm—oh, Lord—there's nothing to say, is there? . . . I'll be over—of course—early. . . . Right. . . . Good-by."

"WHAT is it?" Trudy was staring at him as he turned from the instrument.

"Ted Morgan's broken his ankle," he said. "I'm to play Vassall this afternoon."

She just looked at him, as if she didn't quite understand.

"Trudy!" he cried. "Oh, Trudy—you believe I'm going to make good, don't you?"

For a moment she didn't speak.

"I—I hope so, Pat," she said. "Oh, Pat—I know you'll try——"

For a moment his eyes held hers, almost pleading with her. Then he turned away, with a short laugh.

"All right!" he said. "I—I guess I can't blame you for not knowing!"

"Pat——" But she stopped short with his name.

"It's all right," he said. "You're perfectly right, Trudy. I've no right to ask for anything now. I've got my chance, anyway—poor old Ted!"

He drove over to Forest Hills early, and alone. He wanted to go over his rackets; see to his spikes; make sure that everything was right. And he found there that the atmosphere of gloom, thick enough overnight, had only been deepened by Ted's accident. In him, obviously, none of these men who talked to him had any confidence at all. Ransome was decent—but Ransome always was. Pat nodded as the champion, out of his own bitter experience, told him things that might be useful.

"Thanks," he said. "I've never played him, but I've seen him a good deal."

As he tried his rackets, turning one over to be restrung, having another tightened,

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there mounted in him, slowly, an anger that rose gradually to something like white heat. He heard some of the things that were being said; surmised others.

"Better than Ted, anyway?" he heard one man say. "Of course he is! He's better than any one when he's right! But—he's yellow, I tell you! What difference does it make how good he is? He's like a fast race-horse without a heart!"

Damn them—all of them! They knew nothing of him—nothing of what moved him. They had their swift and easy explanation of anything and any one differing from themselves. Yellow! The ugly word kept echoing in his ears. It was false—he knew it. And he would show them it was false. Show them in the only way, the only fashion, that they could understand. Show them by winning, by beating Vassall—by saving for them the cup he hadn't been thought good enough to defend! No matter what might happen, whether he could or not, to-day he had to win.

Even against Trudy he was bitter as he went methodically about the business of making ready for the match. She, too—even she couldn't muster any faith in him!

And yet, as he went out, at last, to meet Vassall, his eyes sought Trudy as he crossed the porch, and there came to him, as he saw the way she looked at him, the hope that was shining in hers, a curious comfort not to be described. Some tension in him snapped; for the first time he almost understood the way that she was torn. And he could laugh, then, as he waved to her; meet with defiant eyes the gloomy looks that greeted his appearance.

There was a great burst of cheering from the stands when he appeared; with the crowd he had always been a favorite; the feeling among the insiders of the game had never spread to the great mass of its followers. And as, for a few minutes, he volleyed with Vassall, applause broke out spontaneously, again and again, at the sheer beauty of his movements, the grace with which he stroked the ball. Here, for once at least, opinion unformed, eyes untrained in the niceties of the game, were as sure, as right, as any. There was a touch of magic about Pat Tredway's game; there was about its beauty something of the beauty of arrested movement that is caught in the figures upon an old Greek vase.

ONCE the match began he and Vassall settled down to their work quickly. From the very start Pat knew that he was at his best. Every stroke was working for him; it seemed that nothing could go wrong. He made no effort, in the beginning, to force the issue—and nothing of the sort, plainly, was in Vassall's mind. Each was content to win, for a time, on his own service.

Pat had won the toss of a racket; chosen to serve first; held, so, the advantage of the odd game. And, with Vassall serving, and the score five-six in his favor, Vassall gave him his opening, with one of his rare double faults for the first point. At once Pat turned loose all his speed; swept Vassall before him; scored the game and the first set with a superb cross-court shot that brought a wild cheer from the crowd.

Vassall grinned at him cheerfully across the net. Pat knew, none better, that this was no more than a good start; a player like Vassall was never so dangerous as in the face of a reverse. But Pat was on the crest of the wave now; served and won with ease the first game of the second set; set the crowd wild, then, by breaking through the Englishman's service again, and gaining, so, what was vastly more important than a single game's lead.

For now all Pat need do was to continue to win his own service; to do so was to win the set. Upon Vassall was the burden of forcing the play, of trying to recover, against Pat's service, the ground he had lost.

And as Pat was serving now that was a task to appal any man. He was in complete command of that terrific, high-breaking ball he served; he seemed to be able to place it where he pleased; to force Vassall, again and again, to send back weak, high returns that Pat, storming down upon the net, could kill or cut off at his pleasure. Still, as the games went on, following the service now, everything went Pat's way. He was at his own magnificent best; ran out the set at six-three, with consummate ease.

In the third set Vassall changed his tactics; began to play with extreme care; forced the play into prolonged rallies, with much lobbing. The strain was telling a little on Pat; in his very anxiety to end the

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match in straight sets he forced his drives a little; tried for kills from positions too difficult to justify the effort; was tricked, once or twice, at critical moments, by Vassall—as keen a tactician as had ever stepped on a court. And in the critical game, on his own service, a bad decision cost him a point; an error of calculation, so slight as to be almost imperceptible, gave Vassall an easy return instead of one impossible, and Pat saw the ball shoot past him on his left as he raced desperately across the court, caught completely out of position. The game was gone—and on the next Vassall won the set, changing from his swift service to a slow one that, for the moment, baffled Pat completely.

Yet even on the porch of the clubhouse, now, from the men who had, an hour before, looked at him askance, there were real cheers for Pat as he and Vassall hurried inside to change into dry clothes. He had played superb tennis, unbeatable tennis, for two sets; the one he had lost had contained none of the sort of playing that had made it possible for any one to call him what he had heard himself called that day—yellow.

But it took no more than the first two games of the fourth set to give warning that something had happened to Pat. He barely won on his own service. But he knew, and subtly, insensibly, the knowledge ran through the crowd about the court, that something was wrong. The perfect coördination of hand and eye was gone.

And now, time after time, Pat's long drives, passing shots down the side lines, that, all through the earlier sets, had kept Vassall racing desperately from side to side of his court to achieve bare gets, were out by inches. The low drives that had skimmed the net struck the cord and dropped back on his own side; the lightning service, that, for game after game, had fallen within a foot of his chosen mark, was nearly always out or netted.

TO PAT, struggling against the machine-like precision of Vassall's play and the sudden, unaccountable collapse of his own attack, there came the sense of the crowd's dismay; its fear for him. This had happened to him before; there was bred in him the utter conviction that to yield to this strange and sudden inepitude was to compromise with his very honor. To play his game, his own game, come what might—that was the way for him to follow.

And Vassall, his wits as keen as ever, saw his mood and fed it. He stayed back; drove for the base line; gave Pat, time after time, precisely the sort of shot that, now of all times, he could least master or control.

So he played on—into Vassall's hands! Played on, driving for the corners of the court; staking everything, his first serve gone astray, on another precisely like it—that, tragically often, shared the fate of the first. A shocked silence had come upon the crowd; for Vassall, as he won the set and squared the match, two sets all, on a ball a foot outside, from Pat's racket, there was only a perfunctory burst of applause.

Grimly Pat waited for the last set to begin. Nothing was changed. Vassall served; won the first game. He took the second, against Pat's service, on the American's errors; won the third, and assumed, so, a commanding position, by his own fine play.

And now, as he stood, poised, waiting for Vassall to set himself, in a silence so deep that he could hear the breathing of a linesman behind him, Pat knew the real bitterness of failure. Vassall nodded; Pat flung up a ball; crashed his racket into it; heard the linesman cry, swiftly echoed by the umpire: "Fault!" And then, in an instant, something snapped in his brain. He had thrown up his hand; he drew it down again; hesitated a moment. He had been about to fling away another point; to risk a double fault. But—wasn't this what they had meant?

For he knew, in that moment, that he did care whether he won or lost—that, just as Trudy had said, two nights—two ages!—before, nothing in all his life was ever going to mean to him what it would mean to lose or win this set!

He had his choice now—it lay before him, seen clearly for the first time: to go on—to lose, and take refuge behind his own belief that he must, no matter what the issue, play as he had been taught to play; or to fling to the winds all save the desire, the need, to outdo, to beat, that smiling Englishman across the net! To fight—no longer just to play a game, but to fight—to give himself, soul and body, heart and brain, muscle and nerve, to the task he had

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undertaken—the task that, no matter how or why, was his, and his alone, to fulfil!

Once more he tossed up a ball. But this time he drew his racket across it, gently, cunningly, so that the ball sailed slowly, spinning dizzily, across the net; fell, as Vassall swooped down upon it; broke away, sharply, under his racket, so that, while he returned it, he did so, perforce, feebly—with Pat waiting, ready to slip it past him for as clean a placement as was ever scored.

And now, indeed, Pat began to play a game no one had ever seen him so much as attempt. He matched his wits with Vassall; sought to do, constantly, the unexpected thing—and yet, always, the safe thing, the sure thing—the thing that would make no demand upon his failing powers to which they could not respond. He won his service game for his first game of the set; carried the next, against Vassall's service, to deuce five times before he lost it; won his own game, next time, easily—but lost, once more, on Vassall's service, and faced the score of two-five as he took up the service again.

As he glanced over toward the stands he saw a constant movement going on. So—they held him beaten already! His own, his only, partisans had turned against him—were going out, before the end! A red mist came before his eyes as he saw that; in his fury he fairly flung himself upon the ball, and saw Vassall lunge desperately toward it as it sped past him for the first clean ace that Pat had served in the set. Vassall returned the next serve; and Pat's answering drive raised the chalk in the far corner of the court.

A WILD exultation was in him now. Again he aced the other cleanly; won the game on a magnificent smash, that sent the ball bounding high over the green wall behind the Englishman. They changed: something in Vassall's walk, as they passed, brought his teeth together.

Now, as he waited, he did not think of winning—but of not losing. He knew he must not, could not lose. And he faced his last chance as he waited for Vassall to serve. His teeth were bared; his upper lip was drawn back in something like a snarl. He was poised like some lithe animal about to spring. Raging, he met the ball as it came; drove it back; rushed to the net; cut off Vassall's magnificent drive; stopped the ball dead in its rush, so that it fell, a foot beyond the net, dully, heavy as lead, utterly unplayable.

Again and again in that game he was within a stroke, a point, of defeat. But every time he rose to the occasion; drove Vassall back; achieved the impossible. And in the end he passed the other cleanly for the game—got back, so, the chance he had thrown away in the very beginning. On his own service he brought the games to five all.

And then, all at once, he knew that he was again the master of his game—and of the day. Upon Vassall, tiring, balked in the moment of victory, forced to struggle again for what had been within his grasp, he turned the full power of his finest game; swept through the next two games as though some tyro had opposed him. As Vassall's last return found the net he dropped his hands; stood still a moment, in the inferno of sound that rose to the skies above the court. He saw Vassall advancing to the net; caught himself then, and went to meet him and take his hand.

"Played, old son—played, indeed!" said Vassall. "I'd have sworn I had you——"

Pat grinned; muttered something. He was, all at once, unutterably weary, completely spent. He listened dully to those who rushed upon him with their congratulations. They crowded to take his hand; they slapped him on the back.

"Ted said to tell you it was worth a broken leg to see you pull that out!" said Ransome. "Gad! Pat——"

Through the din he heard a voice, louder than its owner knew: "And we thought he was yellow!"

He grinned at that; saw, as Ransome flushed, that he, too, had heard it.

"I was!" he said, under his breath.

Trudy's eyes were shining as he passed close to her, and she stood up, as, just for a moment, he broke out of the line to take her hand. And when, ten minutes later, bathed and dressed, he came back, there was that about her look that made the man beside her mutter some excuse and seek another seat. And all the world, had it not been too busy watching Bill Ransome finish the task of making the cup safe for another year, might have marked the way that Trudy, the unapproachable, sat holding Pat Tredway's hand!

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The Broken Nose

The Murder That Was Arranged, and Was Presently to Take Place in Brook Street, Mayfair, London

By Michael Arlen

IT WAS as George Tarlyon and I turned away from Gainsborough's "Musidora Bathing Her Feet," talking loftily about legs, that we were confronted by a tall and dark young man.

"Sir," he addressed Tarlyon, "I would be obliged if you would tell me in which gallery hang the pictures by Manet?"

"Ah," said Tarlyon, "one letter can make so much difference! You are sure you do not mean Monet?"

"Manet," said the dark stranger, and looked as though he meant it.

"I am delighted to meet a man of taste," said Tarlyon heartily. "We, too, were just about to view the Manets. We are partial to Manet. This way."

We followed him like lambs. Tarlyon's knowledge as to where the Manets were took the form of trying every gallery in which the Manets were not. The dark stranger walked silently and firmly. He was a tall young man of slight but powerful build; his nose, which was of the patrician sort, would have been shapely had it not once been broken in such a way that forever after it must noticeably incline to one side. He carried himself with an air of determination and assurance which would, I thought, make any conversation with him rather a business. His hat, which was soft and had the elegance of the well worn, he wore cavalierly. Shoes by Lobb.

At last a picture rose before our eyes, a large picture, very blue. Now who shall describe that picture which was so blue, blue even to the grass under the soldiers' feet, the complexion of the soldiers' faces and the rifles in the soldiers' hands? Over against a blue tree stood a solitary soldier, and miserably blue was his face, while the others stood very stiffly with their backs to us, holding their rifles in a position which gave one no room to doubt that they were about to shoot the solitary soldier for some misdemeanor.

"Manet," said Tarlyon proudly.

The dark young stranger was absorbed; he pulled his hat a little lower over his left eye, so that the light should not obtrude on his vision.

"These things happen," he murmured. "And they happen like that." But it was as though he spoke to himself.

"Come on," I whispered to Tarlyon, for we seemed to be intruding—so that I was quite startled when the stranger suddenly turned from the picture to me.

"You see, sir," he said gravely, "I know all about killing. I have killed many men."

"Army Service Corps?" inquired Tarlyon.

"No, sir," snapped the stranger. "I know nothing of your corps. I am a Zeytounli."

"Are you, by God!" cried Tarlyon. I envied him, but could not imitate him.

"Please have patience with me," I begged the stranger. "What is a Zeytounli?"

He regarded me with those smoldering dark eyes; and I realized vividly that his nose had been broken in some argument which had cost the other man more than a broken nose.

"Zeytoun," he said softly, "is a fortress in Armenia. For five hundred years Zeytoun

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has not laid down her arms, but now she is burnt stones on the ground. The Zeytounlis, sir, are the hill-men of Armenia. I am an Armenian."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" Tarlyon murmured.

"Why?" snarled the Armenian.

"Well, you've been treated pretty badly, haven't you?" said Tarlyon. "All these massacres and things——"

THE stranger glared at him, and then he laughed at him. I shall remember that laugh. So will Tarlyon. Then the stranger raised a finger and, very gently, he tapped Tarlyon's shoulder.

"Listen," said he. "Your manner of speaking bores me. Turks have slain many Armenians. Wherefore Armenians have slain many Turks. You may take it from me that, by sticking to it year in and year out for five hundred years, Armenians have in a tactful way slain more Turks than Turks have slain Armenians. That is why I am proud of being an Armenian. And you would oblige me, gentlemen, by informing your countrymen that we have no use for their discarded trousers but would be grateful for some guns. And you would still further oblige me by trying, in future, not to talk nonsense about Armenians. Adieu, gentlemen. You will probably hear of me again."

He left us.

"I didn't know," I murmured, "that Armenians were like that. I have been misled about Armenians. And he speaks English very well."

"Hum," said Tarlyon thoughtfully. "But no one would say he was Armenian if he wasn't, would he?"

"Also," said I, "he is the most aggressive young man I have ever met. Manet, indeed!"

"So would you be aggressive," Tarlyon snorted, "if you had been massacred and made an atrocity of ever since you were a slip of a boy, and had spent your holidays being chased round Lake Van by roaring Turks and hairy Kurds with scimitars dripping with the blood of Circassian children."

"All the same," I suggested, "it must be pretty restless for the Turks living in the same suburbs with a crowd of young men like that. I would go a long way round on a dark night to avoid meeting that young man, just in case he might be in a bad temper."

If any one told me the tale of our second meeting with the Zeytounli that very night, and of its consequences, I might humor him, but I would not believe him. But this is what actually happened, toward midnight of that very day, within a stone's throw of Claridge's Hotel, in Brook Street, Mayfair.

George Tarlyon and I had been of the same company for dinner and then bridge at a house in Brook Street. Toward midnight, a gap in the bridge allowed us to slip away, which we did, refusing a last glass of barley-water with passionate restraint. Tarlyon had parked his car outside Claridge's, and thither we walked. Brook Street, at that hour, is undecided between a state of coma and one of glittering abandon; which means that the deathly silence is every now and then shattered by rich automobiles hurling themselves and lovely ladies all covered in pearls and chrysoprase into the bosom of Grosvenor Square. Claridge's, of course, hath music, so that youth may dance. But of pedestrians along Brook Street there are less than a few, and of young men in gents' evening wear running furiously after limousines there is a noticeable scarcity.

He simply tore past us, that young man, in the middle of the road, a few yards behind a swiftly going car. The car stopped near Grosvenor Square. We were more than fifty yards away, and could not determine whether it was a man or a woman who emerged from the car and entered the house, but it looked like a fat little man. Then the car slid away. The pursuing young man had disappeared.

"He can't have been doing it for fun," said Tarlyon.

"Perhaps he's gone to have a bath," I suggested. For it was a very warm night, and running after motor-cars must have been a wet business.

"We'll see," said Tarlyon. We retraced our steps up Brook Street, and passed the house into which the occupant of the car had disappeared. It was a house like another, dark and silent; and as it stood almost at the corner, we went round the corner into Grosvenor Square; at least we were rounding the corner when a young man in a great hurry collided with us.

"Ah!" said Tarlyon.

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"SORRY," said the stranger. I was right about the running—it had made his face very wet.

"So it's you!" said Tarlyon.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said the Armenian, with a sort of furious courtesy. "If you will excuse me, I am in a hurry." He made to pass us.

"We noticed it," said Tarlyon. "In fact we noticed nothing else."

"Damn!" snapped the Armenian. "So you saw me running!"

"So did he," I murmured, looking up Brook Street. A policeman was sauntering toward us.

"If you don't want to be asked any questions by the arm of the law," Tarlyon suggested, "you had better take a turn round the square with us."

"I won't move," the stranger cried passionately. "I have found him at last—I won't move."

"But neither will he," I soothed him. "He's gone into the house."

"Did you see him go in?"

We nodded.

"Ah, but his excellency is clever!" said the Armenian viciously.

We grabbed hold of him and hauled him round the square. He never even pretended that he liked our company.

"I suppose," said Tarlyon, "you've got bombs all over you."

"Sir," said the Armenian, "you are a fool. Do I look the kind of man to carry bombs? I favor the revolver."

"Oh, do you?" said I. Sarcastic I was, you understand.

"And one shot is always enough."

I gave up.

"And where," asked Tarlyon reasonably, "does his excellency come in?"

"He won't come in anywhere after to-night. His excellency is going to die." And with that the Armenian suddenly stopped in his unwilling stride and looked from one to the other of us. His broken nose made fantasy of his dark face, but I remember thinking it must once have been a handsome enough face of its kind, for not even a broken nose made him ugly. He was as tall as Tarlyon, but much slighter; his was a dangerous thinness. He addressed Tarlyon.

"Sir," he said—an Armenian habit, I suppose, that "sir"—"you have intruded your company on me, but I have accepted you. I have trusted you. I have treated you as gentlemen, being by nature an optimist, and I take it for granted that you will neither betray me nor try to deter me. You will understand the strength of my intention when I say that a young girl is concerned in this, that I have sworn a vow, and that if you were in my position you would do what I am going to do. Good night, gentlemen."

"Hold on," cried Tarlyon. "What on earth were you chasing that car for? And who the devil is his excellency? We'd like to know, you see, so as to be able to pick him out from among the other murders in to-morrow's papers."

"Achmed Jzzit Pasha, the Young Turk," said the Armenian softly.

"Ah!" said George Tarlyon. "I see. Enver Pasha, Talaat Pasha, and Achmed Jzzit Pasha of the Committee of Union and Progress. I see. Talaat Pasha has already been killed, hasn't he?"

"Three of us," said the Armenian somberly, "set out from Armenia last year, and each of us had a mission of revenge. One of us—you will remember?—shot and killed Talaat Pasha in a street in Berlin some months ago. Enver Pasha has fled to Bokhara. A murder has been arranged, and will shortly take place in Bokhara. And I, at last, have found Achmed Jzzit, the foulest murderer of all. There is not an Armenian in the world who would not shoot Achmed Jzzit Pasha on sight if he had the chance—but Armenians who come to Western countries at once acquire the nasty Western habit of money-grubbing and forget the glory there is in killing. But I, a Zeytounli, have never forgotten it."

"Were you," I asked, "educated at an English public-school?"

"That is a matter of opinion. But even an English public-school could not make me forget that I am an Armenian, and that an Armenian's first business is to kill Turks; failing Turks, he can, of course, kill Kurds or ravish Circassian maidens——"

"Oh, not Circassian!" I pleaded.

"Well, Albanian," he allowed me. "During the war I fought through the siege and destruction of Zeytoun, and then as an irregular under Andranik; and since the war I have pursued Achmed Jzzit Pasha—and to-night I have found him. He has been

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here in London for some months, but under an assumed name, for he knows that he is marked by the Dashnakists and the Henchakists,* and he is afraid. I will cure him of his fear forever."

And with a wrench his arms were free of our gently restraining hands and he was off down the square. But Tarlyon was swift, very swift; I panted up just as he was again "intruding himself" on the Armenian.

"YOU don't seem to realize," breathed Tarlyon, "that you can't enter a house in Brook Street, kill a pasha, and get away——"

"I don't care if I get away or not," the other broke in fiercely. "Besides, my friend who killed Talaat in Berlin was acquitted. So will you please excuse me, sir?"

It was marvelous what venom that broken-nosed young man could put into a simple question!

"I've taken rather a fancy to you," murmured Tarlyon, "and I hate to think of your going off murdering pashas. Come and have a drink instead, there's a good fellow."

"If I tell you," snapped the Armenian, "that there is a girl in that house, and that I must rescue that girl, then you will perhaps see your way to minding your own business."

"Has the pasha got your girl?" I asked kindly.

"She is my sister, O fool," he said wearily. "And do you think I can allow my little sister to stay in that loathsome old creature's house one night more than I can help?"

"Collar him," said Tarlyon to me; and I grabbed the young man's other arm, though I didn't in the least want to, and we began hauling him round the square again. As I walked close to him I could feel a solid bulky thing in his hip pocket, and I did not like the feeling.

"Now," said Tarlyon, very business-like, "what's all this about your sister?"

The Armenian almost screamed with impatience.

"Have I not told you all along that if you were in my position you would do exactly what I am going to do? Must I explain to you that my little sister was carried away by that old lecher before my eyes? Must I tell you how Zeytoun on the hill was at last shelled to dust by the batteries of two army corps under Achmed Jzzit Pasha, and how the Turks entered the smoking town and gave no quarter to man, woman or child? Must I, just to satisfy your useless and asinine curiosity, ravage my heart with retelling how my father and mother were bayoneted before my eyes, and how I escaped only because they thought me already dead?

"Must I tell you how my little sister was carried away to the harem of Achmed Jzzit Pasha, who, on beholding her, straightway swore a mighty oath that he would not rest from disemboweling Christians until he had ravished her? Did she give way? The slaying went on, day by day and night by night, so that a count of the leaves of the trees in your Green Park would make but a fraction of the number of the dead bodies that lay rotting in the plain of Mush. An expert killer was Achmed Jzzit Pasha; and whether or not the natural blood-lust of the Osmanli was heightened by his oath to ravish my sister, I do not know, but I do know that there has not been such a tale of dead Christians since Timur passed through the land to meet Bajazet.

"And that is the man who holds my sister in that house, while you detain me here with vain questions and idiotic comments. I followed him to Paris, but he escaped me. I found him in Bournemouth; but again I withheld my hand while I planned some way of rescuing Anaïs—fool that I was! But the idea in my head was that I must first get the girl to some place of safety—and then come back, kill him, and pay whatever is the penalty in your country for killing a loathsome animal. But now I have realized that there is no other way of rescuing Anaïs but by killing him first. Always, wherever he goes, he keeps her locked in a room next to his, and thus it must be in this house. Bestial fancies seethe in his brain, and he sleeps lightly. And while the night is dwindling, here I stand satisfying your idle curiosity. You really must excuse me now, gentlemen."

"But hold on!" cried Tarlyon. "Why kill the wretched man at all? Why not rescue your sister with the charming name and let him go on being a pasha until he dies a horrible death by reason of those bestial

*Armenian revolutionary societies—very bloodthirsty.

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fancies which you mentioned? He won't dare come after her—and I don't see much point in getting your sister back if you have got to swing for it more or less at once. Eh, Ralph?"

"QUITE right," said I. "Let's drink it over."

"This is no time for drink," snapped the Armenian. "The night is dwindling—and how can I desist from killing him when, as I have told you, I cannot get into her room without awaking him? And it stands to reason that as soon as I see him I shall also see red, and kill—as I must, by reason of my vow and by order of the Dashnakists. As I have told you I would have preferred to have got Anaïs out of the house first, but that seems impossible."

Tarlyon opened his mouth, and he closed it. I knew what was passing in Tarlyon's mind, and I thought I would let it pass, so that he might think again. But then he reopened his mouth, and this is what he said:

"My friend and I," he said, "might perhaps consider giving you a little assistance, if in return you gave us a promise——"

"I promise nothing."

"Don't be silly," said Tarlyon. "What I wish to point out is that, if my friend and I help you to get your sister out of that house, you must drop this killing business. We will contrive some way of keeping his excellency quiet while you rescue your sister—but you must give your word of honor, or some efficient substitute, that you will not come back and murder the wretched pasha. Now I want no back-chat about it—either you will or you will not."

"But I am bound to the Dashnakists!" cried the Armenian; rather regretfully, I thought.

"Blast the Dashnakists," said Tarlyon. "Yes or no?"

"I promise," said the Armenian suddenly.

Reasonable noises issued from me.

"You seem to take it for granted that we just walk into the house. How do we get in?"

"This cuts windows like a knife," said the Armenian, showing us in the palm of his hand a glittering little thing like a toy dagger. "A German invention."

"The matter will be further facilitated," said Tarlyon, "by our first getting my car, which is opposite Claridge's, and driving in it to the front door. No policeman would dare suspect anything wrong in a house while a Rolls-Royce is standing outside it. Especially, Ralph,, when you are sitting in it."

"I shall be in the house," I said firmly. Not that I wanted to be—but one says those things, and one always says them firmly.

"Perhaps that would be better," said the Armenian. "It will certainly take the two of you to keep Achmed Jzzit quiet while I break in the first locked door I see and get Anaïs. And a Rolls-Royce car is even more impressive empty than when some one is in it—people make it seem possible."

Thus and thus, we got the car and drove bravely to the house. We passed two policemen at the corner of Davies Street, but they were not interested in us. I must say burglary is easy when one has a large and rich car to do it from.

Like all Mayfair houses this had a tradesmen's entrance; through a little gate, on the right of the few steps to the front door, down some steps, and into a little area where was the kitchen door and a window.

"Wait in the car," said the dark young man, and vanished down to the area. We heard a very faint scratching, one little wicked word, a little more scratching; and then the lights blazed up through the glass above the front door, and it was opened. The Armenian stood in the lighted doorway as though he owned the house. I admired him.

Tarlyon's first words when we were in the hall of the house were: "Give me your gun."

The Armenian surrendered his revolver without a word, but he sighed. Then he marshaled us.

"VERY quiet," he whispered. "And very quick. We must try the upstairs rooms to see which is his bedroom. One touch on the door will awaken him, so you must muffle him at once, else he will awaken the servants. In the meanwhile I will find my sister; then I will take her straight out of the house and we will await you in your car—and I will blow your horn twice, gently, to show that I am awaiting you. It will be kind of you, then, to drive us to Mr. Ritz's hotel in Piccadilly where, perhaps, with your influence, we may get my sister a lodging for the night. But, remember,

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keep a tight hold on Achmed Jzzit until I blow the horn—muffle him straightway and let him not open his mouth, else he will bring the whole neighborhood down on us. Let us begin."

We began with a bit of luck—or so it seemed. Having tiptoed up to the first landing, the very first door we touched held the lightly sleeping pasha. We knew he was there by the howl that followed our touching the door knob—indeed he was a light sleeper, that man of bestial fancies! But we gave him no time to make a real noise; we leaped into the room; I switched on the light, Tarlyon leaped on the bed and him, I leaped after Tarlyon, and in a second we held him making smothered howling noises under the bedclothes. We had not even had time to see if he was young or old, but the shape of him suggested a certain age. His was, however, an active and restless shape. We were very gentle with him, almost too gentle, for once a distinct howl issued from somewhere under the sheets.

"Steady," said George Tarlyon to the restless shape. "You'll throttle yourself," he added.

To prevent that we, with a sudden and well-concerted movement, unscrewed his head and muffled him with a handkerchief. We looked upon his face for the first time.

"YOU'RE a nasty, cruel old man," said George Tarlyon.

Achmed Jzzit Pasha looked all that the Armenian had said he was, and more. A fierce old face it was that looked murder at us. His eyes, under white, bushy eyebrows, were frantic and furious, and never for a second did he cease to struggle. I thought of that fine old Turkish warrior of the last century, the man of Plevna, Osman Pasha; this old man was of the same breed, I thought.

We had so far heard nothing of the Armenian; but that Achmed Jzzit Pasha realized that we two were only accessories was evident, for not even his struggling with us concealed the fact that he was listening, listening intently.

A slight noise, as of a drawer hastily banged, came from the next room. It was only a small noise but it had a mighty effect on the old slayer of men. His eyes simply tore at us, his fat little body heaved frantically, he bit my finger in trying to howl—he went quite mad, that violent old Turk. But neither Tarlyon nor I am a small man, and we managed to hold him.

"He's an infernally long time about it," grumbled Tarlyon at last—and at that very moment the horn outside blew twice. We welcomed it.

"Now," said Tarlyon to the heaving old man, "we are about to release you. Your girl has flown, so it's too late for you to make a noise. So don't." And for form's sake he showed the revolver, though I never saw a man who looked less likely to use it. "You may not realize it," he added severely, "but we have saved your life. After the first shock has worn off you will thank two disinterested men for having saved you from the wrath of an Armenian."

With another sudden and well-concerted movement we let go. The pasha did not make a noise. It was evident he realized that it was too late. But in the next few seconds he revealed, for a Turk, an astonishing knowledge of the baser words and idioms of the English language. Then he leaped out of bed, a funny little creature in pink flannel pajamas, and rushed out of the room. Breathless, we found him in the next room.

Now, I have very little acquaintance with girls' bedrooms, but a glance was sufficient to show me that no girl alive could have a bedroom like that. There was no bed in it, and very little else: just a thing like a tall-boy, but made of steel, or so it looked; and that had certainly been ravaged. Then the old man really began to howl, and we hadn't the heart to stop him. He howled himself back to the bedroom, and we followed him, looking and feeling like all the things he said we were.

"But aren't you Achmed Jzzit Pasha?" I pleaded. But the life had suddenly gone out of him; he sat on the edge of the bed.

"My name is Wagstaffe," he said weakly, "and I have the finest collection of Roman coins in the country. Or rather I had. My son, Michael Wagstaffe, has them now—thanks to you two idiots!"

We had heard of Michael Wagstaffe—bankrupt twice, a well-known war correspondent, and a V. C. What can you do with a man like that?

Tarlyon had an idea, which took him to the window; I had the same idea, and followed him. We looked down upon the face

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of Brook Street, and behold! it was empty. Never was a Rolls-Royce car with lamps alight so invisible. We went back to Mr. Wagstaffe on the edge of the bed.

"WE ARE sorry," I muttered, but he seemed not to hear us. George Tarlyon is usually a fine, upstanding fellow, and some people have thought him handsome, but now he looked as though he had been trodden on all over.

Mr. Wagstaffe was whispering, almost to himself: "Two years ago, when I drove him out of the house, he swore that one day he would steal my coins. And now he has stolen my coins. I always knew he would keep his word, for he is a devil. And he always knew that, come what might, I would not prosecute my son for a thief. My Roman coins!" And Mr. Wagstaffe wept.

We explained our position to him. We gave him a brief outline of the facts. We begged him to understand. We pointed out that if his son really had been an Armenian and if he had really been Achmed Jzzit Pasha we had undoubtedly saved his life. I couldn't help thinking that he ought to be grateful to us, but I didn't say that.

He seemed to find a little solace in our discomfiture.

"Ah, he's a clever boy, Michael," sighed Mr. Wagstaffe. "He is always on the lookout for what he calls the mugs. I gather that you two gentlemen are mugs—the same, perhaps, as what are known in America as guys. But I, his father, can assure you that he is not an Armenian; nor has he ever been nearer to Armenia than the Bankruptcy Court, but he's been there twice.

"He calls himself the cavalier of the streets, but when he is up to any of his tricks he disguises himself as an Armenian—the disguise consisting merely of his saying he is an Armenian. It's so simple, he says, for the mugs believe him at once, on the ground that no one would say he was an Armenian if he wasn't. I have only been back from America a week, and he must have been searching all London for me. He probably saw me at the theater this evening, and was going to raid my house alone when you two intelligent gentlemen got in his way. But he is not a bad boy really—he's got ideas, that's what it is, and also mugs have an irresistible fascination for him.

"Take your case, for instance. I have no doubt but that he will be ready to return me my coins in exchange for a check—though, of course, that depends on the check. And I can see, gentlemen, that you are eager to show your regret for breaking into my house and assaulting my person by offering to pay the check yourselves. I thank you; though, indeed, it is the least you can do, and an infinitely more convenient way of settling the matter than wearisome arguments in a police-court—provided, of course, that housebreaking and assault are matters for argument."

I giggled. I simply couldn't help it.

"That's all very well," said Tarlyon, "but what about my car?"

"What is the matter with your car?" asked Mr. Wagstaffe gently.

"There's so damn little the matter with it," snapped Tarlyon, "that it's probably half-way down the Dover road by now."

"Ah," said Mr. Wagstaffe wearily, "I see. Cars have an irresistible fascination for Michael. I am sorry. Was it a good car?"

Tarlyon's answer left no room for doubt.

"Pity," said Mr. Wagstaffe. "A great pity. He may, of course, return it. He may. You cannot, of course, compel him to, for it would be difficult for you, in your position, to put the police on him. But he may return it on his own. Michael is not a bad boy really. He will, I am sure, communicate with me as to what I will offer for the return of my coins. I will then give him the check which you have so kindly promised to post to me to-night, and perhaps he will soften also as regards your car and return it to you. Naturally, he will expect your check to approximate to the value of your car—say, half its value. Michael is something of an expert about the value of cars. That's why I said it was a pity, sir, a pity that your car was not a cheap car. But I am sure you will have no difficulty in finding a taxicab home. They are so abundant in Grosvenor Square that my sleep is often disturbed by them."

The rest of the story is not at all interesting. George Tarlyon's car was finally returned, and George Tarlyon is sorry that Mr. Michael Wagstaffe's nose is already broken.

Another story by Michael Arlen, "The Lark Among Crows," will appear in January EVERYBODY'S, out December 15th.

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"I've driven out here to ask just one question, Barnum: Why shouldn't the bank foreclose and take everything you've got?"

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A Derelict Is Forced to Go Ahead

Mellowing Money

Archer Griffith Turns from the Easy Path—Again His Past Thrusts Up His Own Misdeeds to Bring Him to Confusion and Threaten Him with New Disaster

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Real Man," "The Wreckers," "Pirates' Hope," etc.

Illustrations by J. M. Clement

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

FOR Archer Griffith life was becoming a thing to be lived from hour to hour—days had begun to seem too long as measures of time. Fate, it was certain, had had its way with him; he had ceased to repine.

He was back in the town he had called home. The wildest prank of bad luck, pursuing him in his career as something little better than a tramp, after the war, had brought him there; had caused a freight brakeman to select Bethsaida, of all places in the world, as the spot at which to throw him off. And he had promptly been arrested as a vagrant and set to work in a road gang.

He had accepted that with a certain bitter stoicism; had felt little emotion when John Kingsley had rescued him, taken him into his home, done what he could to force him back into the life from which he had slipped. He had tried to get away from Bethsaida, from John, above all from Margery Stillwell, whom John loved. But fate, or luck, or those perverse actions of a man's own past which continue to have their effect long after he has forgotten them, had worked to hold him in Bethsaida. And he faced the future now with a grin and with cold, cynical eyes.

What had he not done? Robbed Amos Whittlesea, the banker and miser—for the sake of saving Kingsley, to be sure. But in doing so, in taking Kingsley's note from the bank, he had made himself liable to penal servitude. Old Amos would not prosecute. He could not, being dead. And, because Griffith was the Ishmael he was—perhaps, too, because Griffith had come to his rescue when other and less skilful robbers were torturing him—Old Amos had made him his heir; left him, thus, master of the bank, of a fortune; master, too, through note and bond and mortgage of half or more of the business men of Bethsaida, and the farmers of Hartley County.

He had tried, he had wanted, to shirk the whole business—to run away. Margery had stopped that; had turned him instead to the course that was still mystifying Bethsaida. Debtors were not being ground; he was rebuilding the bank; he was working as he had never known he could work. And—he had given Tom Gaffney, keeper of Bethsaida's worst dive—where he himself had once been an employee!—notice to quit in two weeks.

Bethsaida knew that; it didn't know about Griffith's wife. Margery knew most

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of the best and the worst about him—had known when he had kissed her. But not that! God—what a mess! And nothing to do but wait—wait for his enemies to bring the bubble structure in which he lived down about his ears. Gaffney, Roxanna, his wife, Macallaster, bitterest of all, editor of the paper—any one of them might finish him. Among them they could hardly fail.

ON THE second day after Gaffney had been given his notice to quit, Griffith borrowed Kingsley's car for a drive into the country.

"Got to go out beyond Walnut Grove and prod a victim," was the explanation he offered. "Old fellow out there owes me money, and he won't answer Larkin's letters."

"Who is it?" Kingsley asked.

"Barnum is the name—Joseph Barnum."

"I know him," Kingsley nodded. "Mortgage?"

"Both kinds; farm and chattels."

The ironmaster was putting an extra quart of oil into the motor and he reserved his small plea for the victim until Griffith had swung in behind the steering wheel.

"Joe Barnum has had more bad luck than anybody else in Hartley County, Archer. A big family, a lot of sickness, and three old people to support besides his own tribe. His land is poor, and if there is a crop failure anywhere within shouting distance, it catches him. Don't be too hard on him."

Griffith smiled. "Am I not Amos Whittlesea's understudy? Where would I come out if I should try to bolster up every shiftless farmer in the neighborhood?"

Three miles out of town on the road over which he had once tramped with no object in view save to put distance between himself and Bethsaida, he came to the turn where, on the former occasion, he had found Margery with her stalled car. As he slowed the Kingsley roadster around the bend in the road he had a queer feeling that he was seeing double. For there in the ditch beside the grassy bank, in almost the same place where it had stood that other afternoon, was the Stillwell runabout. The only difference was that it was now headed away from Bethsaida, and its pretty driver, instead of probing into the mechanical mysteries under the hood, was on her knees in front of the car, engrossed in an investigative study of the steering gear.

Griffith pulled up and sprang out.

"Not out of gas again, are you?" he asked, with a broad-mouthed grin. She stood up and laughed with him.

"This place seems to be my passage perilous. I'm afraid it's a broken steering knuckle to-day."

Griffith got down and looked for himself.

"Nothing less," he announced. "That means a job for Jed Blevins and his wrecking outfit. Since you can't steer, I can't even give you a tow. Were you on your way to the farm?"

She nodded. "Daddy's making an errand boy of me again."

He waved toward the borrowed car standing in the road. "Your carriage waits. I'm headed for a place near Walnut Grove—Joe Barnum's. If you're not afraid of my driving——"

"If you get reckless I'll make you let me do the driving," she retorted gaily. "I can't let you smash John's car, you know. It's the apple of his eye."

"I'm not smashing anything to-day—not even the precedents," he returned soberly as he set the borrowed roadster in motion. "Will your errand take long?"

"No; I just want to tell Matthews what Daddy has decided to put in the lower twenty next year so he can plan his fall plowing. Isn't it a perfectly gorgeous afternoon?"

"It is—now," said Griffith; and lest he should be tempted to say more, he stepped on the gas and the three additional miles fled to the rear in a humming roar of machinery.

AT THE Stillwell home farm they found Matthews cutting hay with a tractor-drawn mowing machine in the meadow next to the road, and Margery was able to deliver her message without getting out of the car.

"Is that all you wanted to do?" Griffith asked.

"That is all."

"Then, if you don't mind an extra mile or two——"

"Of course I don't."

"I'm glad you are along. I'm not sure that I know the road to Barnum's. You do, don't you?"

"Perfectly. I'll pilot you."

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Out past the crossroads store and post-office which gave the country neighborhood its name, down an obscure and little used lane to a creek bottom, and out of the bottom to a region of rather barren-looking hills she guided him. As they penetrated the hill region the farms on either side of the road told the story of soil poverty in unpainted buildings and neglected fences, and when the car was gnawing its way in first speed up the steepest of the hills she told him that the next place on the right would be Joseph Barnum's.

The hill crested, the Barnum homestead stood forth in all its indigence: a weary old two-storied house from which every vestige of paint had long since disappeared; a barn with a sagging roof upon which the shingles were slowly rotting; a cow yard with a patched fence; the space between the road and the house bare of grass and shaded only by a pair of oak trees whose roots came up like swollen veins through the hard-packed clay around them. Under one of the oaks a group of children stopped their play to stare at the approaching automobile, and on a bench under the other sat a white-haired old man leaning with both hands on the head of a staff.

As Griffith brought the car to a stand at the bars which answered for the farm gate, Barnum appeared from somewhere and began to take the bars down so that the machine could be driven in. Griffith called to him.

"You needn't do that. Come out here. I want to talk to you."

The farmer let himself out and came around to Griffith's side of the car. He was a tall man, unshaven, and with the poverty of his infertile acres written in every line of his gaunt, colorless face.

"You are Joseph Barnum?" Griffith asked shortly, when the farmer came to stand with one foot on the running-board of the car.

"That's my name; yes."

"Well, I'm Archer Griffith, of the Security Bank in Bethsaida. Why haven't you answered Mr. Larkin's letter?"

The man looked down.

"I been layin' off to come in and see you," he said, and his voice was as colorless as the skin of his face. Then he added: "I can't write much, not to do any good."

"I suppose you know well enough where you stand with the bank?" Griffith suggested.

"Yes; I been eatin' it and sleepin' it for a good many year."

"Well, what is the trouble? Why don't you pay your debts?"

The farmer waved a long arm toward the cornfield on the opposite side of the road.

"Look at that corn," he said gloomily. "If I get half a crop it'll be more'n I expect. Last year it was hail, and this year it's the drouth. And I got a heap o' mouths to fill, Mr. Griffith."

"And you think the bank ought to be responsible for your mouths?"

"'F course I ain't sayin' anything like that. But it seems like I can't never get a dollar ahead."

"Do you know how long you've been owing the bank?"

"I couldn't tell—not right offhand. But it's more years than I can count."

"I can tell you," said Griffith crisply. "It is just fifteen years ago this month since you gave the first mortgage. You've never paid anything on that, nor on the second or the third. They are all due and overdue, and now you are not paying even the interest."

"I know," replied the debtor dejectedly. "I was layin' off to come in and see you. But it seemed like I just couldn't get the time."

"ALL right; I've driven out here this afternoon to ask you just one question, Barnum: Do you know of any reason why the bank shouldn't foreclose and take everything you've got?"

The farmer looked away and his face was drawn.

"No," he returned with a break in his voice; "I reckon I don't know any reason."

"You don't? Well, I do," was the quick reply. "See here, Barnum; do you know how much money you've paid out in interest, commissions for renewals, and premiums during the past fifteen years?"

"No; I don't reckon I do—not just rightly. But it's been a heap o' money."

"It certainly has. A man in your circumstances can better afford to starve than to borrow. Your loans, all together, amount to two thousand dollars, even. You still owe the two thousand, and for the use of it you have paid something over thirty-eight hundred dollars, all told, in fifteen years. How do you think you, or any

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farmer, can do business on any such basis as that?"

"My Lord!" sighed the debtor. "Has it been as much as that?"

"It has. For fifteen years you've been paying the bank an average of over two hundred and fifty-six dollars a year. Don't you think that is too much to ask of a farm as poor as yours seems to be?"

Barnum shook his head despondently. "That ain't for me to say, Mr. Griffith. I lost my whole crop two year runnin', and I just nacherly had to borrow 'r quit."

Griffith took a long envelope from his pocket.

"I think it is entirely too much, Mr. Barnum," he said, "so I'm going to do you a bit of tardy justice. Six per cent is the legal rate of interest in this state. I've had Larkin figure your loans at that rate and I find that you've not only paid principal and interest; you have overpaid something between fifty and a hundred dollars. You'll find your mortgages and a check for the difference in this envelope. Unless you owe somebody else, you're a free man once more."

Barnum took the envelope as one in a daze. When the full realization of what had been done to him battered its way into his brain he bowed his head on the edge of the car door and choked, with his thin shoulders heaving. Margery Stillwell leaned over and her eyes were shining.

"It's all right, Mr. Barnum," she said softly. "Don't cry. Go on up to the house and tell your wife. That is the first thing for you to do."

While Barnum was climbing over the bars, stumbling as one blind, Griffith cut the car, turned it and sent it spinning townward. At the first slackening of the speed the young woman said: "What made you do it, Archer?"

His smile was mirthless. "Call it a whim. It was as nearly that as anything, I guess."

"It was nothing of the kind!" she asserted warmly. "Don't you suppose I know?"

"What was it, then?"

"I know; and sometime, perhaps, I'll tell you. But not now."

THE stretches of little used road flew backward in silence, but when they came out upon the traveled highway at Walnut Grove she spoke again.

"Is it true that you have told Tom Gaffney he will have to leave Bethsaida, Archer?"

"It is quite true. I gave him two weeks from yesterday. How did you hear about it?"

"His daughter told me. She is very bitter. Have you given her any cause, Archer—more than her loyalty to her father accounts for?"

"No; not meaning to."

"She gave me to understand that you had; that you were obligated to her."

"Why did she go to you?"

"To ask me to intervene; to get me to persuade you not to force them to sell out and move away. She seemed to think I could do it if I would."

"Well? Do you want to put in a plea for the Gaffneys?"

"I tried to tell Roxanna that I couldn't do that. But——"

"But what?"

"Are you sure she hasn't any hold over you? She talked as if she had."

Griffith slowed the car to a better conversational speed.

"You might call it a hold, of a sort. She is the one person besides yourself who knows that I dynamited the bank vault."

"*Archer!*"

"It is sad, but true. She drove past in her car that night while I was at work. Just around the bank corner she stopped, got out, and came to look in at the door which I had been so careless as to leave unlocked. I saw her and turned the light off. But I wasn't quick enough."

"She—she hasn't told any one?"

"Not yet, I think. But she threatens to if I put the skids under old Tom."

Silence while the roadster flicked another mile to the rear. Then: "What will you do?"

"I shall do just what I promised to. Amos Whittlesea was Gaffney's silent partner in the two gambling joints. I don't know how much real money the old man put into the venture, but I hold Gaffney's note for ten thousand dollars. If he doesn't move on, I shall sell him out."

"And—and take the consequences?"

There was a bit of bad road just ahead, and Griffith checked the speed still more.

"Let's get the proper perspective, if we can," he said. "The 'consequences,' as

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you call them, can be delayed only a short time, in any event. I am the most temporary thing in Bethsaida. Any day, any minute, my little bubble of prosperity may burst, and when it does, I shall disappear; into the hobo dimnesses, if I'm lucky enough to get warning in time; into jail, if Roxanna goes to extremities and gives me away to James Macallaster and the authorities. Strange as it may seem, I don't particularly care. I haven't been building any air-castles. I have known all along that the bubble couldn't possibly endure, and since I have put the things most greatly to be desired hopelessly out of reach, it can make little difference which way the cat jumps—or when."

"What are 'the things most greatly to be desired'?"

"Dreams; the dreams of my youth. I've told you what they were. And with the blowing of the bubble . . . Well, it's like opening the door of a dining-room and then telling a hungry man that he can't go in and eat. A lot of the things that I thought were safely dead have come to life. You don't know what it means to hunger and thirst after righteousness, Margery, and you never will. But to have that hunger, and know it must be denied——"

"You are not denying it," she asserted. "Haven't I just seen what you did for Joseph Barnum? And you have done things of the same kind for others, haven't you?"

"For a few others, as I have come to them, and as they have deserved. The pity of it is that I shan't live long enough in my official capacity to undo any considerable part of the evil that Amos Whittlesea left behind him."

"You *must* live, Archer!"

"The smaller 'must' flies out at the window when the bigger 'must' comes in at the door. And, as I have said, that little thing is likely to happen any day. All I can hope to do is to carry on as long as I may be permitted to; to right as many of the wrongs as possible while the lamp holds out to burn."

"YOU said your helping of Joseph Barnum was a whim: I knew better."

"What was it—in your definition?"

"Sudden wealth has done for you precisely the opposite of what it does for most men; it has appealed to the best in you instead of to the worst. What you have been needing most was a backload of responsibility. You must fight to keep it, Archer—the responsibility, I mean."

He shook his head slowly. "You can see a long way, Margie, but not all the way. It isn't the wealth, or the miracle of it."

"What then?"

"Love," he answered simply; "love for the ideal woman."

"I wish you wouldn't say that."

"Why?"

"Because it is putting the less for the greater; the lower motive for the higher."

"You say that because you don't know the power of love."

She did not say whether she did or did not. The final half-mile of the return to Bethsaida had been entered upon, and with a glance at the clock on the dash, Griffith twisted the car aside through a crossroad and opened the throttle. The detour led to the lower end of Maple Avenue, and the Star plant was reached just as the men were coming out at the end of the day's work. Griffith drove up to the office entrance and stopped.

"I'm going to ask John to drive you home," he announced briefly, as he opened the car door to get out, adding: "There is no need of giving the gossips a new whip to flog you with. I'll stop by and tell Blevins to go out and bring your car in."

And with that he was gone.

THE first of the two weeks of Thomas Gaffney's respite passed without incident, and with no apparent effort on the part of Bethsaida's thorn in the flesh to remove itself. Griffith went early to his place in the bank, and stayed late, and there were no more evenings spent on the Stillwell front porch.

It was during this week that Larkin asked for instructions about the Macallaster mortgages about to fall due. Griffith looked up from the file of papers he was thumbing.

"He has been given the regular legal notice, hasn't he?" he inquired.

"The formal notice, yes. But hasn't he had a talk with you since that time?"

"Yes; and I told him he'd have to pay, or we'd foreclose."

For the first time since his promotion to the desk formerly occupied by James Macallaster, the mild-mannered old bookkeeper seemed a trifle worried.

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"Of course, if you think best," he murmured, "but—but——"

Griffith smiled. "Out with it, Uncle Peter; though I don't believe you can tell me anything I don't already know."

"It's just loose talk, maybe, but—but they're saying that Mac is telling it around that you don't dare to push him."

"He'll find out in a few days," was the calm reply.

Larkin turned to go. But at the door he paused to say: "Are you right sure he can't hurt you in any way, Archer?"

"On the contrary, I'm quite sure he can, if he wants to badly enough. But that doesn't make any difference. Go ahead and call up Travers and tell him to take the necessary legal steps."

Larkin said, "Very well," but he still hesitated with his hand on the doorknob.

"Was there anything else?" Griffith asked, taking up the papers he had laid aside when Larkin had come in.

"I was just wondering if you'd heard the latest—about the two boys that you had the fight with in the room upstairs."

"Harriford and Jefferson, you mean? I never told you that I recognized them, Uncle Peter. But what about them?"

"They've been caught; somewhere out West. Pott was telling me just a few minutes ago. Sheriff Becker's gone after them to bring 'em back."

"I hadn't heard," was the half-absent reply. But for some little time after Larkin had gone out, closing the door softly behind him, Griffith sat staring thoughtfully at the steamship lithograph hanging upon the wall over his desk. And when he resumed the reading of the papers he had laid aside he was letting his thought slip into spoken words: "It's the beginning of the end for you, Archer, old scout; one of the two things you've been expecting. Those young fly-by-nights will have to admit the torture and the killing, but they'll deny the dynamiting, and perhaps be able to prove the denial. Then Roxie Gaffney will come in with her story, and there you are. I've been wondering which of the two powder trains, this or the New York one, would blow up first. This seems to be the answer. What little more I can do toward getting old man Amos's soul off the devil's gridiron has got to be done suddenly."

HE HAD scarcely squared himself at the desk before the door of communication opened again and the old negro janitor and messenger came in with the mail from the delayed forenoon train. On top of the pile there was a letter bearing the New York postmark, and Griffith slit the envelope with the trampish smile once more in place. The letter was brief, but cynically pointed.

MISTER MILLIONAIRE:

Somebody in your hick town has just sent me a paper. It's a fool for luck, every time, ain't it, Archie, dear? But say; do you think you can wallow chin-deep in the good old kale that way and leave me out? Come across, dearie. Make it five hundred a month for a starter, and we'll talk about futures in the future. Don't say you won't, because if you do, the next train out on the Pennsy will bring home your bonnie to you. I'll give you a week to make up your mind and get a check here.

SADIE.

The grinning smile had disappeared and deep-drawn lines were coming between his eyes as he started to tear the letter across, and then he thought better of it and put it into his pocket. It was the end, and he knew it. He had not been posing, consciously, at least, when he had spoken to Margery about that hunger and thirst for righteousness—for respectability. The hunger was there, and it was slowly but surely putting the trampish cynicism to the wall. Discounting all the hypocrisy or insincerity there might be in the changed attitude of Bethsaida, he was fair enough to realize that not all of the change was due to the fact that he had fallen heir to Amos Whittlesea's money, and, by consequence, to the financial overlordship of the town. Not all of the handshaking and growing good will had its origin in the hope that thrift might follow fawning.

Then there was the joy of opportunity; a joy that, because of the threat the future held, he had crushed and smothered, hiding it behind a barrier of caprice, as when he had told Margery that the motive for the deliverance of Joseph Barnum was a whim. She knew better, and he knew that she knew. But the air-castles were all toppling now. He had been laboring under no misapprehension of the culpability of his act in dynamiting the bank vault; the fact that it was a crime had been perfectly clear in his mind. He simply had not cared.

But with the opening of the broad avenue of opportunity the point of view had changed—without changing any of the

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ominous facts. The dynamiting stood out as a piece of crude lawlessness which was now well on the way to discovery. The denials of the two young criminals might not involve him, but, taken with what Roxanna Gaffney could tell, his conviction would be certain. Would Roxanna carry out her threat? Griffith knew the Roxanna type much better than he did any other; its passionate loves and its no less passionate hatreds. Filial loyalty might not turn the scale against him, but jealousy might.

He passed a hand over his brow and dismissed this first count in the indictment of threatenings to come at the second. There was no room for hopeful uncertainty here. The woman in New York would be as good as her word, and if he once began the process of buying her off, she would end by bleeding him white. And the alternative . . . A cold sweat started out on him when he pictured the effect of her advent in Bethsaida as his wife! There would be no resurrection from the deep grave of obloquy she would dig for herself and for him.

IT WAS with an effort that was like a keen physical pain that he took up the work laid aside when Larkin had come in. There were papers to be gone through and the mail to be answered. Again and again he strove to put the encumbering, maddening thoughts out of his mind; to sweep them aside with the grim, reckless determination of a time when he had had nothing to gain and nothing to lose; to view the crumbling of the air-castles as Griffith, the vagabond, would have visioned it. It was no use.

In such a frame of mind it was not singular that he ignored the luncheon hour when it came, and went on working steadily through the afternoon. The task he had set himself was to go through all of the securities held by the bank, reducing them to a reasonable basis, as he had done in the settlement with Joseph Barnum. It involved hours of calculating and the covering of many sheets of scratch paper with figures. At six o'clock Kingsley called for him, as usual, and he went to the curb to say that he was not hungry; that there was more work to be done and he would not stop to go to dinner.

"Not sick, are you?" said the ironmaster from his place in the car.

"No, not sick," he replied; and turned back to the treadmill before Kingsley should ask other and less easily answerable questions.

An hour later, however, he seemed to have changed his mind about eating. Locking his office, he went across to the St. Nicholas, choosing a corner table in the dingy dining-room and telling the serving girl not to make him share it with any one else. The unappetizing hotel meal eaten, he recrossed the street to the bank. But at the instant of key-fitting to gain entrance, he apparently changed his mind again, retracing his steps around the corner and turning up the avenue on its Baptist Church side.

He had traversed the two squares between the church corner and Sixth Street and was halting at the Stillwell gate before he realized that there was a familiar car standing at the curb. It was Kingsley's roadster, and the fragrance of Kingsley's cigar was drifting down to him from the darkened porch. For a moment he hesitated, as if to turn away and go back. Then he unlatched the gate and went in.

They were together on the porch, Margery and the ironmaster, and from the sudden silence which fell, Griffith knew they had been talking about him. Even Kingsley's attempt to be natural did not remove the impression.

"You're a butt-in, Arch," was the form the attempt took. "I've been trying to persuade Marge that the evening is too fine to be wasted while the old buzz-wagon is able to turn its wheels. Won't you kindly say 'Excuse me,' and go away?"

"No," said the intruder; and he drew out a chair, sat down and proceeded to fill his pipe.

"If you are going to settle down and smoke, I suppose that does me up," Kingsley laughed. "All right; I'll see if I can't put a spider in your tea, sometime, to play even."

The talk that followed was little more than a dialogue, Griffith taking no part in it save to answer when he was spoken to directly. After a few minutes of it, Kingsley reached for his hat.

"I see you're determined to sit me out, Archer, and I'll go," he yielded humorously. Then to Margery: "I'm sympathizing with you. You're missing a jolly drive in the cool of the evening because you are too

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good-natured to tell a wooden man he's in the way. Good night."

NEITHER of the two left on the porch spoke until after Kingsley's car had disappeared around the adjacent street corner. Then the young woman said what she knew Griffith was waiting for her to say.

"You wanted John to go, Archer?"

"Yes."

"You have something to tell me?"

"I have. William Harriford and Matt Jefferson are in custody, and Sheriff Becker has gone to bring them home. Had you heard that?"

"No." And then: "I'm sorry for their mothers."

"Spare a little of the sorrow for me, if you can. They will deny the dynamiting, and they may be able to make the denial hold. But that isn't the worst thing the day has brought forth—for me."

"I'm listening."

The push switch of the porch light was within reach of his hand and he snapped it. As the shaded ceiling globe sprang alight he took the letter of threatenings from his pocket and handed it to her. She read it without comment, and when she passed it back he snapped the light off. Under cover of the friendly darkness the young woman asked a single question.

"She has the right, Archer?"

"She is my wife. Perhaps you will understand now some of the things that have been more or less unaccountable to you. But maybe you knew? Possibly John has told you?"

"John doesn't know. He thinks it was a—that there was no legal marriage."

"That was the way Bainbridge had it. But Bainbridge was wrong, and John knows it now. I told him the day that Judge Gorman and Travers came over to tell me that I was Amos Whittlesea's heir."

Silence for a little space, and then: "Did you love her, Archer?"

"Not in your sense of the word. I have never loved any woman but you."

"You mustn't say things like that, now. We must keep the air clear so that we can think straight."

"'We,' you say?"

"Yes, both of us."

For a moment the distant street light at which he was staring lost shape and seemed to be alternately a star fading to its vanishment and a glowing sun to dazzle and blind him.

"God forgive me, Margery!" he said under his breath. "What have I done?"

"Nothing that you could help doing—nothing that hasn't been done for a long time," she returned, evenly matching his subdued tone. "I suppose it just was to be. But we mustn't think of that. There are other things—terrible things. You have a right to your life, Archer; a right to live, and responsibilities to carry. What will you do?"

"I don't know," he replied dully. "I hoped you might be able to tell me. I can't take that woman back and live with her, Margery. She would drag me down to a bottomless pit of degradation. And in Bethsaida .... But you see how impossible that is."

"Is it impossible? Isn't there anything in her that can be appealed to? There must be something in her or you wouldn't have married her, Archer."

"No; it was something that was lacking in me; that, and the asinine sentimentality of the time. I was only one of many fools. I can't let her come here—not and stay here myself."

"She asks for money. Does she need it? But I suppose she does."

"I don't know how she lives; or rather. I do know. She is an accomplice of crooks and yeggs; an adventuress and worse; all this I learned after I came back from France. I have given her all the money that has come my way during the past three years, which hasn't been much. I'd willingly settle an allowance on her now and make it liberal, but she wouldn't be satisfied with that. I know her too well. John says I ought to divorce her—Heaven knows, there is sufficient reason—but I have my own ideas about divorce."

"And I have mine," was the prompt reply. "But there *must* be something to do—some way out," she insisted, with pathetic eagerness.

"I can think of only the coward's resort. I may have a clear week before this woman comes, or before Sheriff Becker can return with his two prisoners. I had a sort of frenzied idea that I'd square things with all of the Joseph Barnums I could reach in that interval, and then disappear."

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"The same old story!" she flamed out. "You'd pull a stunt that would send you to the chair so quick it would make your head swim! Beat it!"

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"But wait!" she interjected with a little gasp. "Wouldn't that be worse than anything you've ever done yet?"

"Worse for me, you mean?"

"For you and for everybody. For you it would mean just turning your back on everything—leaving the plow in the furrow. For Bethsaida it would mean—oh, I don't know what it wouldn't mean! The bank is yours—your property. You can't even give it away without considering this—this woman. If you run away, she can come here, as your wife, and take it. You know what would happen in that event. Bethsaida would be ruined!"

"But the alternative? Or is there any?"

"Not for a weak man; no. Only for a man who would go to the rack or the stake for what he believes to be right."

"Ah!" he said. "If I only had you to stand with me, Margery! But can I stand alone—with every vagrant drop of blood in me urging me to duck and run? The three years of vagabonding are getting in their work now. There is something gone out of me, and I can't get it back."

She got up out of the low willow rocker and went to stand beside him with a hand on his shoulder.

"I could put it back, Archer—if I had the right."

He reached up and took the hand from his shoulder and pressed it to his lips.

"God help me, Margery; don't I know you could?" he muttered. Then: "What a horrible, bedraggled mess I've made of it! If old Amos Whittlesea had been my bitterest enemy he couldn't have invented a more devilish revenge than this loading of the wickedness of his sixty-five years upon me and making me expiate it. Why should I be his scapegoat?"

"You are not," said the firm, cool voice above him. "That is not the right way to look at it. You have been given an opportunity that comes to but few: the opportunity to right a thousand wrongs. You may have to suffer in righting them. Oh, I know—we will both have to suffer. But love is mighty, Archer; it can bridge all the chasms and help where it can neither see nor feel nor touch."

He stood up and took her in his arms, gently, almost reverently, and she suffered him.

"For the last time, dear," he whispered. "Once more you have made a man of me. I'll stay, and fight it out to the last ditch. You know what it will mean for me—for us. From this time on we will have to be as strangers. What that woman will say and do if she thinks, if she even suspects, what there is between us would make me kill her. If you could only go away somewhere until the blast goes off and the rocks have stopped falling——"

She released herself and stood before him in all the glory of her strong young womanhood.

"That is what I shall not do, Archer. That would be as cowardly as the thing I've been begging you not to do. My love isn't so light a thing as that. I shall be here, to help as I can; to—to pray for you; only you don't believe in such things."

He took her hands and kissed them, first one and then the other.

"I believe in you, and in that belief I can take what is coming to me like a man, I hope. And there shall be no compromisings or backslidings, dear; I'll promise you that. I'll play the game to the end, and play it square. But you; you mustn't let this wretched business of mine spoil your life, Margery. By and by, when it is all over and forgotten, John will be waiting—and he loves you well and truly, too."

"And I love him, Archer—much too well to offer him the shell without the kernel. Let's not talk of that. Must you go now?"

"If I stay any longer I shall be sorry, and so will you. You must let me go while I can."

In the passion which seems cold only because it is held firmly in leash she put her arms about his neck and drew his head down and kissed him. "My strong one!" she murmured. "I am sending you away as the women of old sent their lovers—to do and die, if need be, for the right. God go with you, dear!"

With bowed head he returned the answer to the age-old Spanish benediction. "Remain with God, my beloved!" And a moment later the sidewalk tree shadows, earnest of the chasm which must thenceforth lie between them, had engulfed him.

FOR five days following the friendly passage at arms on the Stillwell front porch, Kingsley saw next to nothing of his housefellow. This was because Griffith

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worked early and late, breakfasting before Kingsley was up, and, more often than not, having his luncheon and dinner sent to him at the bank from the St. Nicholas.

It was in the afternoon of the fifth day, shortly after bank-closing time, that Griffith summoned Larkin and handed the old bookkeeper a many-paged memorandum written in pencil.

"There is a list of all our securities, Uncle Peter, with a little sum in subtraction worked out for each of them," he announced, blinking wearily and reaching for a match to relight the cigar which had gone out half a dozen times in the last hour of concentrated figuring. "You'll see what I'm trying to get at. We're going to do justice, though the heavens fall."

Larkin glanced over the list and gasped.

"Why—why, Archer!" he exclaimed. "You—you've made a lot of these people our creditors, instead of our debtors!"

"It is even so; and so they are," was the quiet reply. "Yet all I have done is to figure the loans on a basis of the legal rate of interest. In many cases this process leaves us owing the borrowers, as you will see; but that is all right. We owe them, and we'll pay them."

"Yes, but, Archer, we haven't the money!"

"The bank may not have it in current account, but I have it. Go into Amos Whittlesea's private deposit box and dig out the bonds he had salted away. Sell them, or enough of them to furnish this restitution money. That is sufficiently simple, isn't it?"

It was Larkin who was blinking now. He had been scanning the list and roughly totaling the sums to be returned. Though Amos Whittlesea had been as secretive as most misers are, the old bookkeeper knew to a dollar how much there was in the hidden reserve from which Griffith was proposing to square himself with the borrowers.

"It's f-fine, Archer; the finest thing anybody ever heard of," he stammered. "But it is going to leave you a comparatively poor man. Have you realized that?"

"I have been realizing a goodish lot of things in the past few weeks, Uncle Peter: one of them is that this money doesn't belong to me in any sense—that is, any rightful sense; it was merely passed along to me by the whim of an old man who thought, I imagine, that I'd use it for a club to beat people with—as he had. And as for being poor, I've never been anything else. That prospect needn't terrify a tramp."

"But you are no tramp, Archer, boy; you have never been one at heart."

"Oh, yes, I have; a vagrant and worse. But we'll let that pass. You know what to do about these settlements I've outlined in that list: go ahead and do it, irrespective of anything that may happen to me."

Larkin took the list and the tin box of securities. As he went out, an auto pulled up in the street and Travers, dusty from a twenty-mile drive over country roads, descended from it.

"Sorry I couldn't get here earlier," he apologized briskly, stripping his dust coat as he came in, "but needs must when the devil drives. I've had my hands full all day with those two boys Becker brought back from Denver."

Griffith's eyes narrowed. "So they are here, are they?" he said.

Travers nodded. "Safe and sound in the county jail. I'm retained for the defense. I didn't want the job, but the two fathers wouldn't take no for an answer. It seems that I came highly recommended by one of your leading citizens—Macallaster, of the *Telegraph*."

"YOU mean that Macallaster advised Harriford and Jefferson to retain you?"

"That's it. I was a little puzzled to know why. I have never been on very good terms with Macallaster, and, naturally, the terms haven't improved any since you put those foreclosure actions into my hands."

Once more the trampish smile was wrinkling at the corners of Griffith's eyes.

"You'll find out shortly why Macallaster recommended you," he said. Then he switched abruptly to his reason for summoning the lawyer. "I want your advice in a matter that I couldn't discuss with you over the phone. And I couldn't spare the time to drive over to the county seat."

"Shoot," said the attorney.

"I'll put it in the form of a hypothetical question. Suppose a man should be convicted of a crime and sentenced to serve a

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term in prison. What becomes of his property or his business while he is out of it?"

"Nothing," was the prompt reply.

"You mean that he has the same property rights after conviction as before?"

"Precisely. Of course, if the crime were theft in any of its numerous forms, his property could be attached for recovery; but otherwise——"

"But his wife would have broader rights than she would if he were at liberty, wouldn't she?" Griffith broke in.

"Not at all. She would have her dower rights in the property after her husband's death, but not before."

"Let me get it straight," Griffith persisted. "You are telling me that she couldn't step into the husband's shoes and dissipate the property in any way she pleased?"

"By no manner of means. If she were inclined to be that kind of woman, and her husband had ordinary common sense, he would make any action like that on her part impossible—as could easily be done."

Griffith leaned forward eagerly. "In what way, Travers?"

"By giving some friend in whom he could trust power of attorney to look after his property and carry on his business, and generally to act for him during the period of his incarceration. Under the statute in some of the states—in this one, for example—the woman would be entitled to demand a reasonable amount for her support; could sue for it if she couldn't get it otherwise. But that is all."

Griffith drew a long breath. "That is better," he said; but he did not explain why it was better, or give any hint of his reason for having asked the lawyer to drive twenty miles to answer a few apparently abstract and irrelevant questions. On the contrary, he dropped the inquiry quite as abruptly as he had begun it, opened a desk drawer and took out a box of cigars, tendering them to Travers and taking a fresh one himself.

"TELL me more about Harriford and Jefferson; that is, if you can do it without smashing the professional obligations. What is their attitude?"

Travers's expressionless face wrinkled in a dry smile.

"I'm not supposed to talk, but I know it won't go any further, with you. Between us two and the gatepost, they haven't a shadow of a defense—Amos Whittlesea's dying declaration settles that—and I have so told them and their fathers, frankly. They admit the assault upon the old man, and their intention of robbing the bank. As to the murder, they claim that the single shot was fired recklessly and at random, and was intended more to prevent pursuit than to hit anybody—which I think is quite likely. The odd thing about it is that, after having admitted so much, they both strenuously deny having dynamited the vault. They occupy separate cells in the jail, and I talked with them separately. They both tell exactly the same story."

"Go on; I'm interested," Griffith put in.

"They say they had no means of breaking into the vault, and wouldn't have known how to go about it. Their plan was to terrify the old man into going downstairs and working the combination for them. He had locked his arms through and around the rods of the iron bedstead, and was hanging on so desperately that they were afraid of hurting him worse than they cared to in pulling him loose. So they held matches to his feet to make him let go."

Griffith was turning to his desk for another match when he said: "I suppose you have a theory of your own, haven't you?"

"Hardly anything as complete as a theory. I've had a good bit of experience with criminals, first and last, and I'd stake my retainer on the assertion that those two young scamps are telling the simple truth. Their story bears all the earmarks. My notion is that there was a third man involved, and that he was the one who blew the vault. There is no question in my mind but that job was done by a professional: somebody who knew by experience exactly how to go about it."

"Is there any clue to a third man?"

"I haven't got that far yet. From something that Harriford, the father, said, I was given to understand that there would be more developments a little later; that our friend Macallaster had as good as promised them."

"I see," Griffith nodded. Then: "Of course, you'll make a fight for the boys?"

"Oh, sure; though I've told them and their fathers that we can only hope to get them off with comparatively light sentences. There's no chance to clear them. Huddleston,

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county attorney, is too good a prosecutor; and, besides, he has all the evidence. Amos Whittlesea's declaration settles the question of identity; and, though you have never admitted it, I have a pretty shrewd notion that you recognized them, too. I suspect Huddleston is of the same mind, and if he is, he'll summon you as a witness."

Again Griffith drew a long breath.

"If he does, I shall refuse to testify."

"Oh—oh! You can't do anything like that in Judge Whitcomb's court. He'd jail you for contempt, too quick!"

"That is all right, Travers; but I'm not going to be a party to the conviction of those two misguided boys; that's flat. Is there any evidence that they were the bad actors in the other burglaries that went ahead of the vault-blowing?"

"Not an atom. And that strengthens my third-man theory. There is no doubt in my mind that your town had a visitation of the pure quill—a bunch of professional yeggs taking a vacation from the big cities."

"I COULD swear them out of at least two of the earlier burglaries," said Griffith quietly.

"An alibi?"

"Yes. On the night when Jake Steffner's jewelry store was burglarized, and on the next night, when Brown's place was broken into, I helped put both of those boys to bed, too drunk to see straight."

"Where was that?"

"In Gaffney's roadhouse, out on the Willow Springs road."

Again the dry smile flitted across the lawyer's plain-song face.

"It's pretty evident that you haven't any grudge against the two young rascals."

"I haven't."

"In that case I may call you as a witness for the defense. You could at least testify that the killing wasn't premeditated, couldn't you?"

"Yes; I could do that."

"Good! Let's go a step farther, if you don't object. Did you positively identify those two boys in Whittlesea's bedroom that night?"

Griffith took time to consider either the question or his answer. And after all, his reply was indefinite.

"I don't know, Travers. When you come right down to it, there is no such thing as absolute certainty about anything—not in this world. Suppose we assume that I couldn't go on the stand and swear positively to the identity of the two boys and let it go at that."

The lawyer got up and began to struggle into his dust coat. "I'll have to be getting back," he said. "Did I answer your questions about that property business fully enough?"

"Quite. Send in your bill and I'll pay it. And about the other business: this criminal case doesn't interfere with your civil practise, does it? You can still go on acting as attorney for the bank?"

"Sure I can. And that reminds me. The formalities in Macallaster's matter have all been complied with, and his pledges—the real estate and the newspaper—will be sold at sheriff's sale to satisfy your claim. That is what you wanted done, as I understood it from Larkin."

"It is exactly what I wanted done. And in a few days there may be a similar account placed in your hands for settlement; the collection of a note for ten thousand dollars drawn by Thomas Gaffney and made payable on demand. I've given Gaffney his choice between clearing out or paying the note. If he doesn't go, we'll sue him and attach his two places."

Travers pursed his thin lips in a soundless whistle.

"I'll say you've got your nerve with you; to put a thing like that up to Tom Gaffney!" he exclaimed. "Why, it's an open secret all over the county that old Amos was backing him, and taking a share of the profits."

"I'm doing neither," said Griffith coolly. "And he'll pay or go."

"All right," the lawyer nodded. "It's your funeral. There is a law in this state against carrying weapons, but if I were in your shoes, I'd risk breaking it until this Gaffney business is settled. That's a nice piece of advice for a lawyer to be giving a client, but it goes."

FOR the time which intervened between Travers's departure and Kingsley's stopping by at six o'clock to take him home to dinner, Griffith sat idly at his desk. The huge task he had set himself was done, and the coming of the lawyer had solved the one problem which remained. Also, it had

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cleared away any doubt there might have been as to Macallaster's intentions. In some way, either through Roxanna Gaffney or otherwise, Amos Whittlesea's one-time cashier and understudy had bored his way deeply enough into the happenings of the night of the storm to be able to add something to the facts.

Griffith spoke only when he was spoken to on the short drive with Kingsley to the house at the head of the avenue, and the dinner to which they presently sat down proved to be a silent meal. Since it had begun to rain shortly after the lights were turned on, the porch was uninhabitable, and Kingsley led the way to the library across the hall for the after-dinner smoke. It was not until after the pipes had been filled and lighted that Griffith began to talk.

"I have a confession to make to-night, John. I am going to tell you something I've been hoping you would never need to know. Have you any notion of what it is?"

"I think possibly I have," was the sober rejoinder. "I have a fairly good memory for details, and I'm inclined to be impatient of mysteries. I have never been able to make myself believe fully that I changed envelopes on old Amos the day the big borrow was made, or that, if such a thing had been done, Whittlesea wouldn't have discovered it at once."

"You are altogether right; you didn't change them," said Griffith. "*I* was the one who made the change."

"I have more than suspected it, lately, Archer. The more I thought of it, the more everything seemed to point that way. You knew where you could get the tools, when my watchman's back was turned; and the coat you gave Mandy to clean had some loose grains of dynamite in a pocket."

"Clumsy on my part," said Griffith, with his slow smile. "But that is neither here nor there. I wasn't going to stand by and see old Amos squeeze the life out of you if I could help it; and I knew from the first minute when you told me about your borrow that you were smashed unless a miracle should intervene. So I waited, and blew the vault, and produced the miracle."

"But didn't you know that, in common honesty, I would have to replace the destroyed note and the security?"

"Sure! Still, I made it possible for you to get the full six months you bargained for, instead of the thirty days which was all the time Whittlesea meant to give you. But that is all back-number stuff now. The immediate future is what I am up against to-night." And in the briefest phrases he told Kingsley of Macallaster's threats, of Roxanna Gaffney's weapon, of the practical certainty that the dynamiting would be laid to his charge and proved against him when the trial of the two young men should bring out the facts.

"SO YOU see where I stand," he concluded. "When I did the job, I didn't care a rap about the criminality of it; I'm not altogether sure that I care sufficiently about that phase of it yet—I mean in the sense that it is troubling my conscience. Under similar conditions I might do it again. But I am troubled about the consequences. If Roxanna testifies against me, I shall probably get from five to ten years. I'm not kicking about the punishment, you understand; I shall only get what's coming to me, like any other lawbreaker. But this brings us to the heart of the thing. On the night when I cracked that vault I was a mere bit of human driftwood, responsible to nobody. If I chose to take a chance of going behind the bars for a period of years, it was my own affair, and the world wouldn't stand to lose anything of any value by my drop-out. But it is different now."

"It certainly is," Kingsley agreed. "Margery has told me what you did for Joseph Barnum. If you are going to adopt that policy toward all the people Whittlesea has been systematically holding up for the past thirty or forty years——"

"I have adopted it, and prepared for it—so far as preparation can be made in advance. That is why I have been putting in such long hours for the past two weeks. I knew in reason that my time was short, and, strange as it may sound coming from a man who is likely to stand before the world as a convicted criminal, I realized my responsibility. Amos Whittlesea's money has been a curse to all concerned; it was up to me to make it a blessing if I could. Can you surround that?"

Kingsley nodded slowly.

"I think I can. Because the sudden acquisition of much money spoils most men, we have come to assume that the result is

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inevitable. Of course, it isn't. You have merely reversed the process."

A faint smile greeted this summing-up of the matter.

"You've said it, John. The starting point is the whole thing. When this fortune came to me I was just about as low down as I could get and still be a human being. If there were any change to be wrought, it had to be a change for the better. I couldn't very well go any farther the other way. But we're getting off the track. What I need now is a 'next friend.'"

"You've got one," said Kingsley briefly.

"Wait until I'm through. You remember what I told you that day when you found me getting ready to swing a train down in the railroad yard?"

"About the woman?"

"Yes."

"I'm not likely to forget it."

"Well, the lightning has struck. Somebody—Macallaster, probably—sent her a copy of the *Telegraph* telling of my inheritance, though how he or anybody else ferreted out her address, I don't know. She demands an allowance of five hundred a month; writes me that if she doesn't get it, I'll have her on my hands—here."

Kingsley sat up so suddenly that he dropped his pipe on the floor. "Good heavens!" he ejaculated; and Griffith grinned sourly.

"Do you wonder that I can contemplate the prospect of the penitentiary with more or less equanimity? If you knew the woman as I do, you'd understand why the most miserable wretch roasting in hell wouldn't change places with me after she comes here."

"Yet you say you won't divorce her. I can't understand your scruples about that, Archer. It would seem to be fairly and squarely a moral duty, in the circumstances."

Griffith got out of his chair and began to pace back and forth in the clear space between the bookcases.

"I'm not sure that I could make anybody understand," he offered. "Conscience isn't precisely a thing that you can put under a magnifying-glass and analyze. I don't attempt to account for the blind spots, or the particularly sensitive spots, in mine, but I think I may say this: that through all the rush down the degrading toboggan slide I have contrived to hang on to some shreds and patches of the consideration for women that I was born with."

"Of course you have," Kingsley interpolated; and Griffith went on as if there had been no interruption.

"THIS woman we're talking about grew up in a criminal atmosphere; when it was too late, I found out that she was the daughter of a man who had twice done time in Sing Sing. In spite of that, I have reason to believe that I was the first man to whom she gave herself. That makes the marriage binding—for me. If I didn't believe that, it would be different. I don't know what temptations she ran up against after I left her to go overseas—we were together only two days before my regiment sailed—but I can easily imagine them. Of course, I had no manner of right to marry her and leave her that way. And because I hadn't, I'm taking my medicine. Does that make it any clearer?"

"Oh, I suppose so—in a way. But what is the next number on the program?"

"I'm coming to it. Whatever she was before I married her, she is impossible now. You can picture what she'll do to this straitlaced old town—and to the name my father made honorable—if she comes here as my wife. On top of that, she'll squander every dollar of the Whittlesea money if she can get her hands on it; loot the bank and wreck my restitution scheme to a fare-you-well. This must be prevented in some way, and the probabilities are that I shan't be here to do the preventing."

"I think I can see what is coming," Kingsley put in with a wry smile.

"I wouldn't ask it for myself, John; you know that."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Take over the bank business and run it. I've outlined the policy in writing, and I'll give you power of attorney. You won't have to bother with the routine, of course; Larkin is equal to that. But the thing will have to have a head."

"Anything else?"

"Yes; the woman. She may turn up any day. If I'm not here to take the jolt——"

"I see. I suppose you are willing to make her a reasonable allowance?"

"Anything you think she ought to have—on one condition: that she doesn't stay here

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in Bethsaida. But you won't have to urge that. If I'm not here for her to devil, she'll take the first train back to the bright lights. She doesn't know any America outside of New York."

"Call it settled," said Kingsley; "with the understanding that it is all built on the 'if.' Neither of these catastrophes you are glooming about may come to pass. Here's hoping mighty hard they don't. But if they do, I'm with you to the finish, Archer. Is that what you want me to say?"

Griffith was still pacing the floor with his head down and his hands behind him. After a time he said: "There is one other thing, John: I want to make a clean breast of it while I'm about it. I've been a traitor to you these past few weeks."

"How so?"

Griffith replied in one word. "Margery."

Kingsley shook his head. "You'll have to make it plainer than that."

"A FEW minutes ago you said it was the loading of responsibilities that had stood me upon my feet as a man, and I didn't contradict you. That was a silent lie, John. It was love that did it."

"Your love for Margery?"

"My love for her, and her love for me. You see what I've done to you. If I hadn't turned up here— You were going to win out, John; in time she would have said yes to you, and would have believed she was giving you all there was to give. It is three lives spoiled. When I get to thinking about it—well, it's a great pity that the bullet that was fired into Amos Whittlesea's bedroom wasn't better aimed."

John Kingsley's year on the battle line in France stood him in good stead. There was a little crackling sound as his teeth bit into the horn mouthpiece of the pipe he was smoking, but his voice was quite controlled when he said: "Just after you came here, and before either of us knew you were here, we were talking about you—Margery and I—and I told her what Bainbridge had told me; that your marriage was only a mock marriage. Have you let her go on believing that, Archer?"

"No, thank God; I haven't been quite that base. But the fact—the other fact—remains: I love her, and she loves me. Isn't it hell?"

"You've named it," said the ironmaster soberly; and thereupon a silence of brooding thoughts settled down upon the quiet library, holding its own until Griffith broke it by saying:

"It has stopped raining, and I'm going back to the bank for an hour or so. There are a few little personal matters that I want to clean up while I have time. After what I have told you, you'll understand that I am merely living from day to day."

Kingsley nodded, and Griffith left him sitting in his deep armchair, with the broken pipe still clamped between his teeth.

Instead of cooling the air, the passing shower had left an oppressive, breathless heat in its wake, and when Griffith entered his private office by the side-street door and switched the ceiling light on, he left the door half open to help the ventilation of the small room. Twirling the pivot-chair, he sat down at his desk and inserted the key in the lock. As he ran the roll-top curtain back, a slight noise behind him made him spin the chair quickly. The square-set, burly bulk of the roadhouse keeper was filling the doorway, and his weapon—a big, blue-barreled automatic—was leveled.

"I GOT you dead to rights, this time, you damn' four-flusher!" he spat out. "Now you dig up that piece o' money paper you're holdin' over me, and do it quick, or I'll drill you right where you're sittin'!"

For a fraction of a second Griffith hesitated. It seemed little short of suicide to offer resistance. The covering weapon was only a few feet away, and at that distance Gaffney could not miss. But the pause was merely a muscle-stringing preliminary to a trick brought over from the football practise of the vanished years. With a bound that overturned the pivot-chair he leaped for the light switch. But the floor rug tripped him and he fell on his hands and knees. Though every faculty was strung to the battle pitch, he hardly knew what happened next. Simultaneously, as it seemed, there came a patter of flying feet, a gasping cry, the snap of the electric switch, darkness, and the crash of a pistol shot.

Fully expecting another shot which might be better aimed, Griffith rolled over toward the desk, groped for the drawer-pull behind which lay his own weapon, and swiftly armed himself. The green-shaded desk lamp had a switch of its own and he pressed

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it, holding himself in readiness to fire as the light came on.

But at the click of the switch which flooded the small room with a green-tinged glare he dropped his arm. Beside the door stood the dive-keeper's daughter, one hand still on the wall switch with which she had turned off the ceiling light, and the other clutching the big automatic which she had apparently wrested out of her father's grasp. The Gipsy beauty's eyes were blazing.

"The same old story!" she flamed out. "You'd pull a stunt that would send you to the chair so quick that it would make your head swim! Beat it, before I go out and yell for old Cappy Maitland to come and run you in!"

When her father's retreating footfalls on the sidewalk were no longer audible, the girl flung herself into a chair and the fire in the black eyes died down.

"You had an awful close call, Archie, dear; are you knowing it?" she said.

She was toying with the big pistol as if it were a plaything; and after he had set the little electric fan in motion to blow the powder smoke out of the room, Griffith took the weapon from her and laid it upon the desk. Then he picked up the overturned pivot-chair and sat down.

"I'm not so sure about the closeness of it," he offered. "I hadn't begun to fight when you broke in. But we needn't argue about that. Were you shadowing him? Or did you just happen?"

"'Twas no happening. I've been looking for this any time these two weeks. It's cruel hard on us you are, Archer Griffith."

"Am I? But your father's business—if you want to call it that—is cruel hard upon this town. Have you ever stopped to think of that?"

She was regarding him through half-closed eyes.

"I thought I knew you, Archie," she said soberly, "but you've got me going. Is it on he level—all these things they're telling bout you?"

"What things?"

"You know: giving back the money old Amos stole, and all that."

"You want to know if I've really turned over a new leaf—a decent leaf—this late in the game?"

"That's it."

"And if I say that I have?"

SHE turned her head aside and he saw her bosom heave in a sigh that was almost a sob.

"See how easy it is—for a man!" she said. "All you have to do is to turn around and push all that ever has been behind you with one hand."

"No," he returned gravely, "it isn't so easy as all that, Roxie. We pay as we go; men and women alike. I am paying now, and I shall pay more before I am through. You are going to make me pay."

She shook her head.

"I meant to," she declared. "If you drove us out I was going to snitch—not to Jim Macallaster, but to the lawyers."

"You have changed your mind about doing that?"

"I can't do it, Archie; and well you know why I can't."

"But you ought to," he suggested. "You were a witness to the committing of a crime—the only witness. I wasn't trying to buy your silence when I offered to surrender your father's note if he would sell out and go away. I expected you would testify against me when the time came. I still expect it."

"But I can't, Archie, dear!" she protested, and now the black eyes were softly luminous.

"You should; or at least you must be free to do so if you are called upon. And I'm going to set you free." He crossed to the small safe built into the corner of the room and knelt before it to twirl the combination and shoot the bolts. From the locked cash drawer he took the note signed by Thomas Gaffney and held it out to her. "There is the club I was holding over your father. Take it to him and tell him we're on an even footing now, as man to man. I'll fight him fairly; but if I stay in Bethsaida, he'll have to go. Will that prove to you that I'm on the level, Roxie?"

She pushed the slip of paper away and covered her face with her hands.

"I'll not take it!" she refused, with a tearless sob; but he laid it in her lap and went back to his chair.

He had barely taken his seat when heavy footfalls sounded on the sidewalk, and a moment later the uniformed figure of the old town marshal appeared in the open doorway. With a quick movement, Griffith displaced a pile of papers on the desk to cover Gaffney's gun.

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"Hello, Arch!" said the peace officer, with the ingratiating familiarity which he, and others, had assumed when it became known that Griffith the tramp had been metamorphosed into Griffith the heir to Amos Whittlesea's fortune. "Workin' late, same as usual, are ye?" Then, as his eyes adjusted themselves to the lighted room: "You here, too, Roxie? What you doin' here?"

"Business," she replied snappily, folding the note that Griffith had given her and tucking it into the bosom of her gown.

"Ain't been shootin' at one 'nother, have ye?" Maitland went on, with a grin. "Thought I heard a pistol go off as I come down the avenue a little spell ago."

Griffith matched the grin with a good-natured smile.

"We don't look very warlike, do we, Cappy?" Then: "We heard the noise, too. Sounded to me as if somebody's automobile tire had blown out."

"I guess maybe that's what it was," the marshal acquiesced, and went his way.

When Maitland's flat-footed tramping died away in the distance, the girl got up to go. Griffith offered her the captured weapon, but she refused to take it.

"No, you keep it," she said; "he's got plenty more. He'd ought to lose it for making the crazy break he did."

"I don't need it," Griffith returned. "I'll leave it in the poolroom as I go by on my way home."

At the door she paused with her hand in her bosom.

"Do you mean for me to keep this paper you gave me?"

"I do. I don't know how much real money it represents, and I don't care. It's yours—to give to your father or to destroy, as you please."

"If you're doing that, I'll believe it now."

"Believe what?"

"That you're on the level. And if that's so, you'll not get any the best of me, Archie. We'll go—and you won't have to drive us. Good-by."

FOR some little time after she was gone, Griffith sat musing. It was a bloodless victory, but its effect was to make the way to complete reintegration a little more thorny; to give birth to a temptation which had not existed while he held the whip hand over Thomas Gaffney. For now he knew that, all intention aside, he had virtually purchased Roxanna's silence, and that, failing his own admission of guilt, he could never be convicted of the crime that James Macallaster was trying to fasten upon him.

It was deep in the night when he finally dipped his pen and wrote out the two papers which remained to be written. One was a power of attorney authorizing Kingsley to take over the administration of his affairs. The other was a will by which he left the inherited fortune to be divided equally between John Kingsley and Margery Stillwell, with instructions to make provision for the woman he had married, but to resist, by every legal means, any attempt on her part to break the will.

This done, he locked the papers in the office safe to be signed and witnessed on the morrow, shut his desk, and turned homeward.

OWING to the prominence of the families to which the two young men belonged, there were many Bethsaidan machines parked in the court-house square at the county seat on the morning when the case of the People against William Harriford and Matthew Jefferson was reached on Judge Whitcomb's docket. Among the cars, Kingsley's green roadster advertised the presence of its owner; and at a little distance from it stood the battered runabout in which Margery Stillwell had driven herself and her father over from Bethsaida.

As was to be expected, the courtroom was densely packed. Every seat in the space set apart for the public was filled, and as many more onlookers as could crowd in lined the side aisles and jammed the standing room in the rear. Within the bar the two long benches reserved for the purpose were filled by the talesmen from whom the jury would be drawn, and at the table below the judge's desk sat the county attorney and his assistant, a red-headed young man who was a nephew of the Bethsaida Potts.

At the other end of the table Travers was holding whispered conference with his clients. There was little of bravado left in either of the two young men. Amateurs in crime, they were now apparently trying to nerve themselves for the ordeal impending. Jefferson's round, boyish face, already beginning to show the marks of dissipation in heavy eyes and loose lips, was a mask of nervous anxiety, and young Harriford's,

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haggard and wild-eyed, gave him the look of a trapped animal.

On Travers's usually expressionless face there was also a shadow of anxiety. From time to time he broke off in his whispering to the pair at his elbow to gaze out over the crowd as if searching for some one who had as yet failed to appear. While there were still some minutes to spare before the opening of the court, he left his seat at the table and went to the bar railing to lean over and speak to Griffith, who was sitting with Kingsley in the front row of chairs.

"Did you see Gaffney or his daughter before you left Bethsaida?" he asked.

Griffith shook his head.

The lawyer said something under his breath that sounded like "Damn!" Then: "They were getting ready to leave yesterday, and I knew it, but I didn't suppose that girl would run away from a subpœna!"

Griffith's eyebrows lifted. "You had her summoned as a witness?"

"Sure thing," said Travers, lowering his voice to a whisper. "My theory was as right as rain. There *was* a third man, and Roxanna Gaffney is the witness who can prove it. She saw him at work."

It was Kingsley, rather than Griffith, who looked shocked at this eleventh-hour development. "Where do you get all this?" he demanded.

Travers answered briefly. "Macallaster. An old printer of his who rooms in the building opposite the bank gave the clue. He saw an auto drive around the bank corner and stop, and whoever was driving it got out and went back to look in at the side door. Macallaster's known about this all along, but like a pig-headed fool, he didn't tell me until yesterday. Said he was waiting until he knew the name of the unknown witness."

This whispered explanation appeared to redouble Kingsley's perturbation, but Griffith's face betrayed no emotion.

"ROXANNA has admitted that she was a witness?" he asked.

"I haven't seen her. But she'll admit it under oath, all right. For some reason of her own she refused to talk to Macallaster; denied everything until Mac told her how he had found out, through the Gaffney garage boy, who was with her that night, that she had stopped at the bank."

"What will you do?" Griffith inquired.

"Ask for a continuance, of course, if Roxanna doesn't show up. Best excuse in the world—absence of a principal witness."

"Don't do that," Griffith interposed quickly. "Go on with the trial and I'll see to it that you have your witness."

"You will? Do you know where to find the girl?"

Griffith glanced up at the clock over the judge's dais. "Yes; I know where she is." Then he hesitated. "If I go, can you square things with Huddleston? I'm one of his witnesses. He summoned me yesterday."

Travers frowned. "Did, eh? Identity, I suppose. I've got to have that girl. Can't we send a deputy after her?"

"I doubt if an officer could find her, without too much loss of time."

"Then for heaven's sake go, and I'll try to stand things off so that Huddleston won't miss you. I can stall 'em along until noon, anyway."

As the lawyer went back to his place at the table, Griffith reached for the hat under his chair. It was then that Kingsley came fully alive to what the finding of Roxanna Gaffney would mean. There was little chance for anything like secrecy in such a public place, but he dragged Griffith down and whispered hoarsely in his ears: "Good Lord, Archer! Do you know what you're doing? If that girl comes and testifies——"

"I know quite well what I am doing, John," was the low-toned reply. "Just sit still and watch the wheels go round until I get back. May I borrow your car?"

"Borrow it and drive it, and keep on driving it until you get across the State line!" was the young ironmaster's fevered advice. "If you come back here with that girl——"

But Griffith was already edging his way to the crowded aisle, and as he was forcing a passage through it and out through the jammed doorway, the judge took his seat on the bench, and the cry of the court officer, "Oyez! oyez! oyez! this court is now in session!" broke in upon the susurrant murmur of subdued voices in the thronged room.

Griffith's fate lies in his own hands. The next instalment of "Mellowing Money" will show the outcome—in January EVERYBODY'S, out December 15th.

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1923

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Values

Standards to Measure Values Are Different, but in the End They Reach the Same Result

By I. A. R. Wylie

SIR PHILIP OLIVER was a man of science who had somehow or other struck the popular imagination and become popular. England is noted for her contempt for her living great and her pride in the dead, but Sir Philip Oliver, living, had been placed on a pedestal and worshiped as a shining example of national genius. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that he had climbed upon the pedestal—not laboriously, but by a few carefully calculated and eye-catching moves.

For one thing he had married a young and very beautiful woman. She was also very wealthy, the part owner of a huge industrial concern which employed two thousand men and women and brought in a many-figured revenue. She had also a young brother, a mere boy, who in his day was to inherit his share of the business but whose delicacy of constitution made his inheritance a matter of considerable doubt. To him Sir Philip Oliver was as a father. In his interest and on behalf of his wife Sir Philip Oliver wielded a direct influence over the great firm of Arnold, Smith & Co. All this was in addition to his scientific work.

And then there was his charity. An example was the building of the Model Hospital, but more attractive still was his generosity toward a certain needy confrère. Every one who read the half-penny papers knew how Dr. Emanuel Rogers, a young and promising scientist, had been snatched from horrible privation by Sir Philip and had, as his secretary, almost as his son, been placed in a position of comfort and security. These actions were all popular. They had earned their performer not only a knighthood but what was more, large headlines in the evening press. They threw a humanizing light on the strictly scientific side of his character; they made his discoveries beautiful and romantic in the eyes of a vast public to whom discoveries are valuable in proportion to their sensationalism. And Sir Philip's discoveries had all been sensational.

Sir Philip had discovered a new planet and a new explosive which was calculated to blow a whole city into unrecognizable chaos. He had, so it was said, given a clue to three new diseases which his protégé Dr. Rogers had followed up triumphantly. No one had ever heard of the diseases before but after their discovery three patients in the free wards of the Model Hospital had died from them. Further, Sir Philip had developed a theory concerning the North Pole which he intended to test by personal experience. Vast preparations for an expedition in which Sir Philip was to be the scientific light and the financial prop were in progress and duly described by a patriotic and effusive press.

It will be seen that Sir Philip was a man of very many parts—a great man, a man of whom England had a right to be proud, a man, moreover, whom any woman might be glad and thankful to call "husband."

It was curious therefore that Lady Doreen did not look a happy woman. As she sat by her fire in the dainty boudoir which yet succeeded in being curiously chilly and comfortless, her small, foreign-looking face bore an expression that made

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the man opposite her think of an image of grief he had once seen in an Italian gallery. There was no trace of tears in her dark eyes; her small delicate features were gravely composed; and yet tears and a deep, corroding bitterness were somehow dumbly expressed in every beautiful line.

For a long time her companion had not moved, had scarcely glanced at her, his rugged, grimly attractive face turned to the firelight. He was a very big man. He looked as though all the seas and winds of the world had beaten against him and molded him into a grand massive emblem of themselves.

A boy sat on the rug at Lady Doreen's feet. The most casual glance revealed their relationship, only in the boy the delicacy of the woman had been refined to a dangerous fragility. He was laughing and in the midst of his laughter he coughed.

"Old Rogers poked me about all over," he was saying, "and then he listened to my chest. He was funny, Doreen."

Lady Doreen touched him on the shoulder.

"I think you had better go now, Rupert," she said. "I—I want to speak to Captain Eliot."

The boy rose immediately. He kissed her with a boyish carelessness and swaggered from the room. They heard his cough long after his footsteps had died away on the long corridor. Lady Doreen covered her face with her hands.

"I'm frightened, Captain Eliot," she said.

He shifted his position, his hands gripping his knees, his face still turned resolutely from her.

"Why are you frightened?" he asked curtly. "Is it the expedition?"

He missed the wan smile that hovered about her lips.

"No, it's not that—my husband will always be safe. And then—you have charge of it and I have confidence in you."

"Have you?" He flushed to the roots of his fair hair. "That's decent of you. I'll bring your husband back safe, never fear."

"I'm not afraid," she repeated. "It's Rupert who is troubling me. How long they are talking! Why could not they have had me in too? I am his sister. I have a right to know."

He held out his big hand comfortingly but withdrew it before he had touched hers.

"It will be all right," he said firmly. "You mustn't worry. Boys are often delicate—I was myself once—yes, you may smile; I am sturdy enough now but once a puff of wind would have knocked me over. They sent me abroad and I've never been ill since. That's what they'll do to Rupert: send him abroad—out into the clean wholesome seas until he has a chest and shoulders like mine."

She glanced at him—a swift, comprehensive glance of admiration for his breadth and strength.

"You comfort me," she said briefly.

A CURIOUS, constrained silence fell between them. In the next room they could hear the dulled murmur of voices and one at least of the listeners could visualize the scene. She saw her husband seated at his table—subtly pompous and domineering—and before him in his favorite deferential attitude, Dr. Emanuel Rogers. But even her imagination could not follow their conversation.

Dr. Emanuel Rogers was speaking slowly and carefully. He was still a young man but with the bearing and expression of incalculable years. The great bald forehead, bending over the deep-set eyes, the thin compressed mouth, were allied with the stooping shoulders and gaunt frame to make him seem even older than his companion. Sir Philip looked his fifty years—but he bore them well. No man would have thought, judging by the calm, almost expressionless face, that behind that air of quiet and indifference a hundred schemes and theories were fighting their way to complete formation. Yet he looked the scientist. He had the lofty aloofness, the passionless detachment of a man to whom men are infinitesimal links in a chain of reasoning.

"In this country I give him six months," Rogers finished at length. "Send him to Egypt and he may live. He will never be strong—but he may live. That is my ultimatum."

He spoke with a momentary flash of authority which died out as Sir Philip rose to his feet. It was almost as though he had risen in order to dominate his employee.

"You are a doctor," Sir Philip said in his toneless monotonous voice. "You are a man of science. I have made you one.

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What value exactly do you place on my brother-in-law's life?"

"What value—humanly speaking?"

"I mean—of what value is this boy—what is he likely to become—what is he likely to do? In what way would the prolongation of his life justify—a sacrifice?"

Dr. Rogers frowned. His hands were loosely linked together. They were thin, red-knuckled hands that seemed to belong to a past period of privation and misery.

"He is just an ordinary boy—he will become an ordinary man," he answered.

"And I?"

Rogers started. "I'm afraid I don't understand, Sir Philip."

"It's easy enough. Weigh us—this boy and me. In the scale of values—who weighs heaviest?"

"There is no question of that. The world knows what you are, Sir Philip—what science owes you. But surely there is no need for comparison."

"There is need," was the sharp stern answer. "You are a doctor, Rogers, and you have to judge between two lives, only one of which can come out unscathed by your decision. There is this boy—a commonplace weakling—and myself. You talk of what I have done for science—you will remember perhaps what I have done for you. It has been a costly business, Rogers. My wife's fortune is already crippled. This expedition swallows up the last reserves. If she inherits—" He stopped short and then went on dispassionately. "If Rupert Arnold lives there is an end of my research—incidentally of my philanthropy. If he dies I can go on. You follow me?"

Rogers looked up for an instant, a hunted glance of interrogation.

"I quite understand, Sir Philip."

"I am glad. I have brought you up in my own school of thought and you have proved a brilliant pupil. For the ordinary crowd sentimental considerations may count, but we judge differently. Life is only valuable in measure of its intrinsic utility in the advance of knowledge, and the common morality must be put aside as an impediment. There is no question of personal feeling. In this case you have judged the respective merits and you will save the life that counts."

"Sir Philip—do you suggest——"

The elder man laughed outright.

"Were you suddenly stranded with two men dangerously ill on your hands and only appliances enough to save one of them and you chose the best man—would that be murder?"

"No."

"That is what you have got to do now. We have only appliances—money—enough to make one life of any use. I leave it to you as a man of science to choose."

"There is Lady Doreen——"

"Are you going to throw a woman's sentimental affection into the scales?" was the retort.

Emanuel Rogers's face had become suddenly expressionless and Sir Philip went on with a change of tone. "And there's more than my life in the scale—there's yours, my young friend. My failure involves yours. With my ruin you can bury all your ambitions and unproven theories. And against all this is a boy whom you yourself have called a commonplace weakling. What are you going to do?"

Dr. Emanuel Rogers lifted his head.

"The values are obvious," he said. "I have chosen."

Sir Philip nodded and as though all need for discussion were at an end he opened the door leading to his wife's boudoir and entered. Emanuel Rogers followed. The two people by the fire rose involuntarily and Captain Eliot made a movement as though to go, but the woman held out a detaining hand. It seemed an instinctive gesture—a quick movement of appeal and only two men saw it, Captain Eliot and Dr. Emanuel Rogers. Dr. Emanuel's eyes dropped. He had his bony hands clasped in his favorite attitude and waited. Captain Eliot waited also.

"DR. ROGERS has told me his candid opinion, Doreen," Sir Philip said. "You will have to be prepared for the worst. Rogers, you had better be quite honest."

Emanuel Rogers looked up. For almost a minute his eyes rested on Lady Philip's white, quiet face, and their cold intensity changed indefinably. Then he glanced at Captain Eliot, who was frowning into the firelight again.

"It would be cruel to give you any hope, Lady Doreen," Rogers said slowly and methodically. "Both lungs are badly affected. It would be cruel to suggest any

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remedy. It could only trouble the patient and be of no avail. The kindest thing is to yield to the inevitable. That is all I can say."

She swayed slightly and though he did not look at her Captain Eliot's hands tightened in a spasm of pain. Dr. Rogers saw the movement, for he was watching furtively, but Sir Philip saw nothing.

"You must be reasonable, Doreen," he said. "We all die sometime and in the meantime the fittest survives."

She threw back her small head. In a flash she had measured her husband from head to foot with an infinite contempt.

"I am reasonable," she said. "But I love my brother and love is greater than reason. Dr. Rogers, I trust you. Is there no hope—can nothing be done?"

There was scarcely an instant between her question and his answer. Yet that instant weighed heavy with suspense.

"Nothing," he said.

"Even science has her limits—as yet," Sir Philip added. "One day perhaps—we shall hold even life and death in our hands—eh, doctor? But at present we must bow to the inevitable. Captain Eliot, I have some plans I wish to discuss with you. My wife will excuse you."

Dr. Emanuel Rogers had withdrawn to the window and stood half hidden by the curtains. He saw Captain Eliot hold out his hand to Lady Doreen. He saw the brief formal hand clasp but he saw also the tanned storm-beaten face, and a faint cynical smile twitched at the corners of the doctor's lips. Noiselessly he slipped across to the opposite door and from it glanced back. Captain Eliot had also glanced back for an instant; the eyes of the two men met over the bowed figure of Lady Doreen.

For she had dropped down by the chair, Captain Eliot's chair, and with her head buried in her arms was crying soundlessly.

"GENTLEMEN, science is the supreme light we follow and if we follow to our death we follow gladly."

The concluding sentence was received with tumultuous applause. The ladies in Sir Philip's audience cried a little and many men were more moved than is generally considered manly. The great reception room was decked with Union Jacks and there had been an abundant supply of champagne at dinner. Also the man who had spoken was to set off within twenty-four hours on a journey from which there might be no return—for the sake of science, without hope of reward. With one accord the great assembly rose and sang "For he's a jolly good fellow," not wholly in tune but with a deep enthusiasm.

Outside the gates of Sir Philip's brilliantly lit home a little group of men stood and waited. They bore no resemblance to Sir Philip's guests. They were ragged and bowed under the weight of invisible chains. A liveried servant had opened the gates to them and one of the scarecrows had acted as spokesman.

"If Sir Philip would only see us for a moment," he said.

"Sir Philip is engaged," the servant interrupted intolerantly.

"We are starving," was the simple answer.

"I tell you, Sir Philip is busy——"

"And I tell you we are starving." An ugly note had crept into the man's husky voice—a sound like the grinding of chains about to snap under intolerable strain. "We have wives and children starving with us," he finished sullenly.

Something flashed out of the darkness—something white and shimmering. Lady Doreen came out from under the trees. She was leaning on the arm of a man who towered above her delicacy. The light from the gate flashed on her jewels and on her small face with its drawn look of suffering. It flashed too on the spokesman and she stopped short.

"What is it?" she asked.

The liveried servant drew himself up.

"Men from the works, m'lady," he said. "They want to see Sir Philip. I told them——"

"Why do you want to see Sir Philip?"

The man scowled at her, his eyes on the jewels.

"We have been asking to see Sir Philip these many days and this is our last chance. We're starving. In the old days of your father, m'lady, life wasn't easy but we could live. We can't live now—that's what we've come to tell Sir Philip. We can't go on."

"Why not—what has happened?"

"Wages cut—that's what's happened." He gave a barking laugh that rang with

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hysteria. "Fifteen bob a week now and ten hours' work a day sweating in hovels cattle couldn't breath in—that's what's happening. And we're starving—all of us—starving by inches. If Sir Philip goes away and makes no change—we're done in, that's all."

The hate had gone out of his voice like an expiring flame. He looked at her with a listless despair.

"Wages cut!" she echoed. "And I didn't know. I trusted—why didn't you come to me?"

"We thought you knew—it's you we belong to——"

"Belong!" She turned with a fierce gesture to the man beside her. "Captain Eliot, give what money you have to this man—and here, here are all my jewels. Take them and sell them and——"

The man took the necklace and the money and threw them on the ground with a savage contempt.

"We don't want charity—we want justice. That's what we want."

The woman wrapped in her silken cloak and the man in his rags stared at each other in a moment's silence of equality in dignity and purpose. Lady Doreen laid her hand on her companion's arm.

"This—gentleman is right," she said. "And I was wrong. I am sorry." She turned to the spokesman. "You do not belong to me, but I am responsible. Your wages shall be raised tomorrow. You have my word——"

"Your husband's word, m'lady——"

"My word," she replied proudly.

She yielded then to Captain Eliot's gentle insistence and they turned and went up the broad path to the house. Other couples were wandering to and fro in the twilight of a summer's night. Lanterns flashed in the gloom and music came sweetly over the flower-scented gardens. Here and there a reporter stole out, watchful and observant. For Sir Philip had seen to it that his farewell should be recorded in black type and bold headlines.

THE man and woman walked together without speaking. Lady Doreen's hand rested so lightly on his arm that he scarcely felt that it trembled. His own arm was not very steady, for that matter. It was his last night in England—perhaps the very last—but at the best the last night when he should walk through the gardens with Lady Doreen. That fact stood out clearly in his thoughts.

They entered the conservatory. It was the merest chance, but a curious one, that they should straightway meet Sir Philip himself. He was talking to Dr. Emanuel Rogers, who looked peculiarly famished and gaunt in his immaculate evening clothes; and the tones of his cold voice sounded like the water dripping on the flags of the fountain.

Lady Doreen withdrew her hand and went forward alone. Against the fairy-like background of palm and flowering orchids she looked ethereally beautiful. Dr. Rogers glanced at her and his eyes dropped.

"Philip," she said, "I want to speak with you a moment."

He frowned slightly as one frowns at a tiresome child.

"Another time, Doreen. Your guests want you——"

"I have other guests—outside at the gate. It's of them I must speak to you."

"I don't understand. What guests?"

"The men from the works." She met the blaze in his pale eyes with a desperate courage. "They're starving, Philip. They say their pay has been cut and they can't live. Only fifteen shillings a week——"

"More than enough, lazy, extravagant louts. You have been very foolish to listen to their lies——"

"They were not lies. I could see that it was the truth——"

"At any rate it was foolish of you to come to me. I shall do nothing."

"I have not come to ask you to do anything but to tell you what I have done. I have promised that their pay shall be raised——"

"You?" For an instant husband and wife stared at one another and in that breathing space the showy trappings of their union were torn down, leaving a naked enmity. Then Sir Philip laughed. Throughout he had retained his composure, his icy air of scientific detachment.

"I am sorry that your promise cannot be kept, my dear child," he said. "Do you think I reduce wages for the pleasure of the thing? I cannot afford an increase. Were I to make any change my research work would be hindered, I should be handicapped intolerably. My discoveries——"

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"What are your researches—your discoveries—compared to human life and happiness?" she cried.

He looked at Dr. Rogers and then at Captain Eliot with a tolerant smile.

"Women don't understand these things," he said. "They have no sense of values. My dear Eliot, I should be so glad if you would say a few words to our guests before you go. You as leader of our heroic little band—" He slipped his arm through Eliot's and the two men passed on out of the conservatory. But Dr. Emanuel Rogers did not move. He was watching the woman who stood white and silent, her head thrown back in an attitude of passionate protest, and like a long smoldering fire passion blazed into the deep-set eyes and flooded the sallow cheeks with color.

"Lady Doreen," he said. "Lady Doreen—" She did not seem to hear him, and he took a step toward her and touched her. "Lady Doreen—forgive me—but we are old friends—you and I. I think I understand."

"Understand?" The pressure of his hand on her arm aroused her to a knowledge of his words, and she turned and looked at him. "Dr. Rogers—what is the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing new. Give me a minute, Lady Doreen. A great deal depends on it—happiness and perhaps life—things you value."

"Whose life and happiness?"

He did not answer for a minute. He seemed to be gathering himself together, controlling himself with an immense effort of the will.

"I want to tell you first what it is I understand. I have known you a long time, Lady Doreen, and I have studied you. I am a doctor and a doctor knows something of the soul though he may deny its existence. Lady Doreen, you are eating your heart out in loneliness and grief. You thought you married a hero, a genius, and you find instead a stony-hearted egoist——"

"Dr. Rogers—you forget——"

"Nothing. Your husband made me. I am prepared to sell at my own price. I am prepared to ruin him—I am prepared to betray him— Do you want your brother to live?"

"Dr. Rogers—for God's sake——"

"I could make him—I would—for your sake——"

THE restraint was gone. The storm, leashed for years by prudence and a dogged patience, had broken out with a mad fury. He had both her hands and kissed them savagely before she broke free from him. And then she struck him wildly across the mouth.

After that it was very silent between them. The distant music played a curious accompaniment to their quick breathing. Footsteps sounded on the marble pavement of the conservatory. In the reception room the guests were applauding loudly. Dr. Emanuel Rogers's hand was pressed to his mouth.

"That was your brother's life you struck at," he said quietly and almost indifferently. "Life and happiness—things you value."

"There are things I value more than life and happiness," she answered breathlessly.

"Honor?" The footsteps were quite close now. Dr. Rogers glanced over his shoulder and smiled. "I do not believe in honor, Lady Doreen. But I made you my offer and you have chosen. I have nothing more to say. Good night—and good-by."

"You said — you could save my brother——"

"At my own price. Good night."

He bowed to her and Captain Eliot, who had re-entered and now came forward with outstretched hand.

"I too have come to say good night," he said.

Dr. Emanuel Rogers went on his way. But at the door he hesitated, smiled to himself, and retraced his steps. At a turning in the avenue of palms he branched off and noiselessly took his place where the whole length of the conservatory was visible to him. Neither Lady Philip nor her companion had moved. They were staring at each other and their watcher saw the agonized suspense, the struggle written vividly on their drawn faces. The man stood rigid, his hands at his sides, his face whiter than hers. Yet his voice sounded quiet and motionless.

"I shall not see you again, Lady Doreen," he was saying. "I wanted just to tell you not to worry. I'll see your husband safe through. I have the devil's own luck, you know."

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"Have you?" She tried to smile at him. "I shall think of you all. I know how brave you are."

"Brave? Well, I need to be something. I'm not clever. I'm a bit of a fool—all round. Not like Sir Philip. You must think of that—in—in the bad moments—of his genius, of his discoveries. He is a great man——"

"Only I value other things," she said swiftly. "That is because I am a woman."

Dr. Rogers stirred. The fight was near its climax. He watched as he had watched his patients die of his new disease, with a passionate curiosity. He saw the muscles of the man's jaw tighten—he saw that the woman was trembling. Yet they held their place.

"I shall think of you, too, out there on the snow fields," he said. "It'll help to make me play the game—right through, always."

She held out her hand.

"We—we've been friends, haven't we?"

"Real pals—yes—always."

"Rupert loves you. He sent his love. I'm glad he loves you——"

They were groping for words as storm-driven ships feel their way between treacherous shoals.

"God bless you both, Lady Doreen. We may meet again—sometime."

"Yes, sometime. I think great friends do meet again—sometime. God bless you too."

He had dropped his hand. Their eyes met and it was as though no power could sever them in that leave-taking. It was as though each had hold of the other's soul and clung to it with the unbridled passion of despair. Dr. Emanuel Rogers counted the seconds, the heartbeats, calculating the depths which yawned in front of him with his knowledge of human frailty.

Then Captain Eliot swung on his heel and was gone.

Dr. Emanuel Rogers came out then. He bent over the woman who had slipped to her knees and now lay stretched on the marble flags like a flower that has been cut down in its full beauty. He kissed her. Then methodically he drew out his notebook, scribbled on a sheet which he tore out, folded and forced it into the palm of her clenched hand.

THE dogs had done good work and now they were dying off like flies. The ponies had long since gone and most of the men who had set off from the *Fearless* three months before on their journey north. Now only Sir Philip, Captain Eliot, Dr. Rogers and an indomitable Eskimo remained. None of them was recognizable. They had encountered one misfortune after another; bad weather and ill-chosen routes had harassed them from the beginning and their faces were discolored and distorted with suffering. Sir Philip had borne up best. Even when food was at its scarcest he had taken his meals regularly. On him and his scientific notes depended the whole success of the expedition. That fact had been tacitly acknowledged, and Dr. Rogers reeled as he walked and Captain Eliot had the look of a man who is no longer fully conscious.

There was now one sleigh left with food enough for a week and Sir Philip's scientific materials. And still thirty awful miles to safety. Around them brooded the intolerable arctic stillness under which there stirred something intangible. It was as though a dangerous spirit had broken free from a long sleep beneath the ice and had become watchful, waiting its moment. The Eskimo pointed to the sky and shook his head significantly. Rogers followed the indication and touched Eliot's arm but Eliot did not lift his head. He was mumbling to himself as he had mumbled now for days past.

"Doreen — tell Doreen — the straight game——"

And then abruptly he collapsed.

Rogers bent over him and when he looked up again Sir Philip had reached his side. The two men eyed each other through the fast increasing darkness. It was not the darkness of night but of storm. Already a cutting wind whirled to meet them over the endless plain of ice, bearing with it flakes of snow.

"Blizzard!" the Eskimo shouted gutturally. It was the only English word he knew, learnt of their bitter experience, and the word sounded ugly in the stillness.

Sir Philip pointed at the man lying at his feet.

"Must leave him," he said. "Must push on—all costs—leave him."

"No." Rogers answered. "Not now."

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They had learnt to economize with words. Speech had become difficult. But they measured each other like wild beasts. That morning another man had been left behind. His feet had become frost-bitten and he had lagged. Sir Philip had not waited for him. He had pushed on. Rogers had said nothing and Eliot had taken no notice. He had walked on mechanically, mumbling a woman's name; he had not had food for twenty-four hours and a veil had dropped over his senses. And now his turn had come.

The snowflakes fell faster. Wordless, instinctively they pitched their camp. Within the narrow confines of the stretched canvas, they waited the onrush of their enemy. The Eskimo had rolled over in his sleeping bag and his heavy breathing sounded grotesquely animal-like. Eliot lay where Rogers had rolled him. He did not move but he talked on monotonously and always the name sounded out from amidst the torn disjointed sentences. Sir Philip heard nothing. He had gathered his instruments about him as though they armored him against fate, and sat there waiting. At intervals he took food. He took it unhesitatingly, adding Eliot's share to his own.

Rogers dozed with half-open eyes.

Two days passed. Their stores had diminished painfully and two more dogs had died. The cold had become awful. Rogers woke once and saw Sir Philip crawl over to where Eliot lay unconscious and draw away his fur covering. Rogers stirred then and his hand fell on his benefactor's shoulder like a vise dragging him back. Neither man spoke but there was hell in Sir Philip's eyes as he crawled to his place.

The third day the blizzard seemed to slacken in its fury. They were to push on. The dogs were harnessed and the Eskimo entered to gather up Sir Philip's cases. Rogers kicked them aside. He pointed silently to the figure lying in the corner. Sir Philip sprang at him and was driven back with a blow that, coming from the frail, weedy figure of a man, seemed superhuman.

"Must leave him," Sir Philip said. "My instruments—count first. Must leave him."

"No. Not now."

"Do you forget—I'm master——"

Rogers drew out his revolver. Something like a smile distorted his face.

"I am master now," he said.

"My work——"

Rogers made no answer. He took the precious instruments and hurled them out one after another into the storm. No word was spoken after the inarticulate scream had broken from Sir Philip's lips. The Eskimo appeared at the entrance of the tent. He pointed to the waiting sleigh and spoke in his own tongue.

"He says part of the stores bad," Rogers translated briefly. "Enough for two days left for all."

"Enough for two men for a week," Sir Philip added.

"Yes."

"Two of us might do it."

"Yes."

"That fellow understands the dogs—he must be one."

"Yes."

Through the white curtain of falling snow a pale radiance had begun to manifest itself. It brightened with each instant and slowly, imperceptibly the curtain thinned and lifted, leaving free a world of eternal whiteness.

SIR PHILIP crawled back into the tent. Rogers followed and the canvas flap fell behind them. They faced each other. Rogers had the look of death. All the years of privation had suddenly returned to scrawl their indelible writing on his pinched features. He held himself with an effort which his companion noted triumphantly.

"It's one of us, Rogers. We've got to choose."

"Yes."

"We've not got to think of ourselves in this matter. We've got to weigh our values. Which of us weighs most? You've destroyed my instruments but what is in my brain cannot be destroyed. I hold data enough to shake our present theories to their foundations. I shall revolutionize science. And science is all that matters to us. We agreed on that, didn't we?"

There was a note of the old arrogant patronage in his voice. Almost he had regained his fluency of speech. Rogers swayed.

"I'm done for," he said.

"Then I leave you. I shall tell the world of your heroism—your sacrifice in the cause of knowledge—" He stopped short. He was looking at his companion's hand.

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"Put that down, you fool—if you want to kill yourself——"

"I am not going to kill myself. Sit down. You asked me once, as a doctor, what I would do if I had two dying men on my hands, only one of whom I could save. I told you—I'd save the best man——"

"Well?"

"That's what I am going to do."

Sir Philip tried to laugh.

"Are you mad? You are a clever doctor. Thanks to me you discovered a new germ, but to compare yourself with me——"

"I'm not comparing myself with you. I'm done for."

"Then——"

"I've conquered you and myself with that man—that man whom you wanted to leave out there."

"Eliot—that thick-headed fighter——"

"A white man, Sir Philip, something you and I are not. Listen—he is talking in his delirium. It's your wife's name that is on his lips, every hour. He loved your wife, Sir Philip——"

"The hound! And you dare——"

"But he never spoke to her—never as much as kissed her hand. *I* loved your wife, Sir Philip. I tried to buy her, body and soul. I kissed your wife, Sir Philip."

"You?"

The muzzle of the revolver held him motionless, foam at lips, his eyes red with the fury of fear.

"I am a cur, Sir Philip. I have killed men with my ambitions. I have followed in your steps ruthlessly. It was not humanity but myself whom I served. It was not to save life—to make life more tolerable—that I dared to sacrifice life, it was to glorify myself. And you—what are you? You have ground men and women under your heel, you have racked them with starvation in order to satisfy your greed for knowledge. You did not shrink from virtual murder. You dared to put yourself above the value of a child. What are you? What good have your discoveries done to your brothers and sisters? Have you made a man or woman happier for your existence? When you go back will a single human being be happier for your coming? If either of us went back who would care—who would offer up a single prayer of thanksgiving——"

"Prayers!" Sir Philip burst out with a gust of furious laughter. "You, a man of science, a sniveling sentimentalist! My God, was it for that I dragged you out of the gutter? Prayers and human happiness——"

"What else counts—what else has value but human happiness?"

"Who taught you that, you fool?"

"The solitude—your wife and this man. Those two were greater in one hour than you have been in all your life. If they had been less than they were I could have sacrificed them. Don't move, Sir Philip. There is no law to protect you now. I am judge; and I am a doctor and I know the values. I am no sentimentalist. One life can be saved. I shall choose the highest type of life. This man is a clean man—he has lived cleanly and honorably. He loved your wife, whose life you ruined, whose brother but for my belated intervention, you would have murdered. He gave you his food, he risked his life for you. When he goes back he will make her happy at last. He will make others happy. He will have great-hearted, honorable children like himself—and her. I have chosen the best man, Sir Philip——"

"Rogers—for God's sake—you said you loved my wife—for her sake——"

"For her sake I have chosen."

He pulled aside the tent flap and called out into the stillness. The Eskimo entered and they spoke together in a language Sir Philip did not understand. Then they picked up Eliot between them and carried him out to the sleigh. His feverish murmur had ceased and he slept peacefully.

Sir Philip watched them like a man hypnotized. From time to time his lips moved in a helpless endeavor to articulate. He crawled to the edge of the tent and the last snow beat coldly against his face. The glory of an arctic day brightened over the whole unearthly immensity. He tried to spring to his feet and run forward, to protest, to assert himself.

Dr. Emanuel Rogers turned. He held the revolver and step by step he drove the other man into the tent. No word was spoken now.

At the tent door Dr. Emanuel Rogers stood for an instant watching the dark speck creeping southward. He waved cheerfully.

Then he went into the tent, and let the flap fall.

He sat opposite the gibbering scientist, revolver in hand, and waited.

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The Return *of* Sledger

A Story of Life Where Simple Things Are Still Full of Their Old Meaning

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Illustration by Grattan Condon

TO ILLUSTRATE the fantastic quality of a man's eyes, how they look on one thing and see another, take the example of Mr. Grover Kinchin riding through the lanes in the southern part of Wayne County, Tennessee.

Mr. Kinchin's road lay among narrow creek-bottom farms where the young corn twisted in the intense sunshine; where blackberry and elder bushes rioted over dilapidated rail fences; where lizards, green, blue and stone-gray, dozed in an ecstasy of heat; while over the whole scene lay the faint white film of high summer.

And yet Mr. Kinchin saw almost nothing of this. Every turn in the lane flushed a multitude of other scenes and emotions in the covert of Mr. Kinchin's head. His eyes took on a clairvoyant quality, and several miles before he reached a certain log schoolhouse, he already saw it. When he really passed the schoolhouse he peopled its perfectly empty grounds with boys and girls; and half a dozen different scenes, which in reality had occurred years apart, now tumbled forth in simultaneous confusion, jostling and elbowing each other in the most unmannerly fashion. And that is how a man's eyes trick him when he returns home after a long absence.

Mr. Kinchin came out of his imaginings long enough to glance around and see if his dog were following him. This was a white and tan collie, her pelage stiff with burrs and beggar lice. Mr. Kinchin sucked his lips at her, and at the sound his horse gave a little start forward; for the same signal applied to both brutes. The collie, no matter how tired she was, always received it with a wriggle of affection, and the horse, no matter how jaded, with a start of fear.

As Mr. Kinchin rode down the lane an old man in a corn field dropped his hoe and hurried to the fence, holding aloft a knotty hand. When the drover stopped the elderly one leaned against the top rail of the fence, peered up at the horseman with eyes wrinkled against the midsummer glare and after a moment of rather blank staring said they were having a hot spell.

This was so obviously a switch from his original impulse that the horseman laughed and displayed tobacco-stained teeth in his sunburned face.

"You don't know me, Mr. Boggus."

"Well, now I don't," admitted the old fellow. "I thought you was that dratted tick inspector and I jest walked over to tell him I wouldn't dip a hoof of my cattle not if he got forty true bills agin me—but you ain't him. I know him."

The rider nodded. "I heard all your cattle's got Texas fever in the lower end of this county."

"Well, you heard a blame lie," denied the old man instantly.

"Hope you're right," said the rider. Then, as his eyes wandered across the dark green hills which cuddled the narrow creek-bottom farms, he asked with overplayed innocence: "Wonder what them buzzards is sailin' aroun' fur? They're comin' down in three or four places."

The old man became suddenly and intensely angry. "Why, dad blame it, my

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young buck, that ain't no sign of Texas fever. A cow's like any other critter; when her time comes she's bound to go. If the good Lord marks the sparrer's fall, don't you know He's watchin' as big a thing as a cow? I tell you right now"—he drummed a calloused fist on the top rail—"I won't dip my cattle an' interfere with the workin's of Providunce fer nobody. Besides that, nobody or nothin' can ride up to my farm an' tell me what I got to do and what I ain't got to do. They cain't do it!"

Mr. Kinchin smiled with the sophistication of travel and experience. "It might he'p 'em," he prodded gently.

"He'p nothin'!" roared the old hill man. "By gum, I don't b'lieve in med'cine. I'm sixty-nine year old and I never tuk a dose in my life and now by gravy, I ain't goin' tuh start givin' med'cine to my cows at my age."

Here Mr. Kinchin flung back his head and burst into a roar of disrespectful laughter. "I swan, same old Bill Boggus; not a day older nor a grain more sense—the devil shore seasons his far wood."

Mr. Boggus transferred some of his wrath against the county cattle inspector to this young man. He peered up at him again.

"Who the devil air you?"

Now such a direct query was doomed to disappointment. Among Tennessee hill folk no name is ever given on first inquiry. It titillates them to make a little mystery of themselves. So the horseman tipped his head to one side and asked, "Don't you know *me?*" And the old man forgot his wrath to enter the customary guessing contest.

"Is this one of the Naylor boys?" "No." "Is it one of the Brasheers?" "No." "You ain't one of the Praters, air ye?" "No." "Then, by gad, you're a impostor! You ain't nobody I ever knowed."

The rider slapped his saddle, made his horse flinch and his slut jump up at him, and reeled to and fro laughing in the scorching sunshine.

"Me an impostor—well, well, I don't reckon you ever heard o' the name uv Kinchin."

Mr. Boggus was grinning broadly now and thoroughly enjoying himself. "You don't mean one uv ol' man Tobe Kinchin's boys?"

"Yeh."

"Well, I never would uh knowed you from Adam's mule—which one air ye?"

"I'm the eighth un, Grover Clevelun' Kinchin."

Mr. Boggus studied the young man as he recalled this multiplicity of Kinchins. Finally recognition somehow made itself apparent in his grooved and leathern face. The effect lay, perhaps, in some redistribution of the wrinkles. At any rate he cried out, "Look here, ain't you young Sledger Kinchin, the one what run off to Texas when the gran' jury found a true bill agin him?"

THE horseman's mirth suddenly vanished. "My name's Grover Clevelun' Kinchin an' I went off tuh Texas because I wanted tuh go, an' I don't give a damn what people think I went fur—I jest went!"

Here Mr. Boggus burst into creaking laughter. "Well, dad burn my skin, if here ain't young Sledger Kinchin got up his gall to come back frum Texas after three or four year——"

"After ten year!" corrected Sledger indignantly.

"Well, I be hanged, is it that long? Ten year——" The old man ruminated. "Then you must hev gone out there before yore pap died."

The man on the horse straightened somewhat and his face changed. "Is pap dead, Mr. Boggus?"

"Didn't you know it?"

"Why, no!"

"Ain't you written back none?"

"Well, no, I ain't. It—it was a good deal of trouble to write, an' then I didn't have nothin' much tuh say, an'—an' then I thought maybe the sheriff might see my letters travelin' through the post-office an' find out where I wuz."

The old man nodded at this perfectly reasonable explanation. "So he might. Well then, Sledger, it was the flu. It wuz kinder hard on yore fam'ly. Yore pap an' yore mammy, too, an' Jeems Garfiel' an' Andy an' Calline——"

"You—you mean they air all—all—" He broke off, biting his lip hard and his sudden grief staring out of his eyes.

The old man nodded. "You see," he explained woodenly, "they wuz all tuk down at wunst. Their sickness wuzn't scattered along so they could wait on their se'ves, an' all the neighbors had their own han's full—"

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Youth and man remained silent in the sunshine for two or three minutes; then the younger man said: "I wanted tuh see mam. I rid back from Texas to see——"

"An' a better woman never lived, Sledger," nodded Mr. Boggus. "Gone tuh the reward God had fur her, an' me, who neighbored with her fer forty years knows hit was a great one."

For a while the two remained lost in the tragedy; then Mr. Boggus said: "Well, we might as well be gittin' on up toward the house, Sledger; it's gittin' on toward supper-time." He glanced at the sun to verify his sense of the hours. Then he clambered stiffly over the fence, avoided rolling the top rail, and once down, moved off through the lane at the head of the horse. The collie came up circumspectly, sniffed at Mr. Boggus's legs and retired. Presently the farmer asked over his shoulder in a cheerful tone:

"Well, howd'je git along in Texas, Sledger?"

"Fust rate, Mr. Boggus, fust rate."

"Made a lot o' money, I reckon?" There was a slight irony in the query.

"Ten dollars out there to one here."

"D'ju happen to git yore fingers on any of them ten, Sledger?"

For answer Sledger drew a wallet from an inside pocket, opened it and showed it full of bills.

Mr. Boggus looked at it woodenly. "Ones," he suggested—and hoped.

Mr. Kinchin silently riffled his sheaf and exposed a repetition of tens flanked by a few twenties.

"Well, I'm blamed," said the old farmer grudgingly. "That is more money than I've seed fur a long time." A sudden thought struck him. "Look here, Sledger, you ain't robbed a bank or nothin', hev you?"

Mr. Kinchin loudly denied this possibility. "I made this drivin' Texas broncos up through Arkansas an' Mississip', an' runnin' back Tennessee hawgs an' cattle to Memphis. They's money in it if a man keeps his eyes open."

"Oh, then you come up here cattle-buyin'?"

"Well, I wouldn't min' buyin' a few cattle, though I ain't hurtin' to slap my bran' on none."

"Oh, no!" agreed the old farmer dryly. "No cattle buyer is ever partic'lar anxious to buy cattle. They're all ridin' aroun' fur their health, an' to look at the scenery."

"An' to watch the buzzards circlin' aroun'," added Mr. Kinchin meditatively.

The old man turned. "Now looky here, Sledger, if you expect to buy my cattle, that ain't no way to start talkin'."

"I'm not carin' nothin' special about buyin' cattle," reassured the young man earnestly, "and besides I couldn't git yore cattle through the quarantine. I know they ain't got Texas fever nor nothin', but the cattle inspectors an' constables an' depity sheriffs air full of their own idees on the subjec'."

Mr. Boggus snorted dryly. "No, I imagine you couldn't rustle them cattle through the quarantine. I'm satisfied the youngster who was run off to Texas ten year ago couldn't possibly rustle a few perfec'ly clean cattle through a dad-rotted, tyrannical, overbearin', pig-headed quarantine!"

THE bitterness of this irony caused the rider to smile again at the man on the ground. The old farmer saw him and was correspondingly irritated, but he said nothing and stalked along at the head of the horse. After some space of crunching through the dry bed of the watercourse that formed the lane he said without looking around:

"Now—uh—Sledger, I want tuh tell you now, before we reach the house—" Here he broke off to scratch behind his ear and pull at his grizzled ear tufts.

Mr. Kinchin stiffened slightly and after waiting a reasonable time for information, asked with a faint touch of combativeness:

"Well, what is it you want tuh tell me now?"

"I want tuh tell you the preacher's at my house this evenin' an' termorrer."

The young man looked blankly at the back of his host. "The preacher?"

"Yeh, the preacher. His wife died two year ago an' he's a mighty fine stiddy man. Rides up here every Sat'day evenin' an' preaches over Sunday. Mighty fine stiddy man. Owns his own farm and never takes up no collection at meetin' unless the church house needs repairs, which it usually does. But anyway he ain't responsible fer that, an' he's a blessin' tuh this settlemint."

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At the rough embrace the girl gasped. "Oh, Grover! Don't let me stay here! I cain't stand it!"

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Such a panegyric left Mr. Kinchin quite at sea and somehow faintly irritated. "I cain't see what you air tellin' me about him fer."

"'Cause I want you tuh stay with me," explained Mr. Boggus solidly. "You're a ol' neighbor's boy. I want you tuh stay with me, Sledger, buy my cattle if you be so minded, but I don't want you cuttin' up no monkey shines aroun' my house."

"What the hell's the preacher got tuh do with that?"

"You will see when we git thar, Sledger."

Mr. Kinchin chewed on this distastefully; finally he broke out. "Looky here, I don't understan' you talkin' to me like this a-tall."

MR. BOGGUS looked around grimly at his guest. "I ricollec' what they run you off to Texas fur, ten year ago, Sledger."

The tan on Mr. Kinchin's face grew darker. "Good Lord, Mr. Boggus, a man kin change a heap in ten year."

The old hill man cleared his throat. "A man cain't change a-tall, Sledger. You air whut you air, an' so you'll stay tull they lay you in yore grave. God made his saints unto salvation, Sledger, and the sinners he created unto etarnal destruction. You cain't any more change whut God mapped out fur ye, than you kin lift yorese'f by the boot-straps, Sledger."

The hill folk of Mr. Boggus's faith never come out plainly and state toward which destination they consider a fellow mortal traveling, but the trend of their remarks seldom leaves the point in doubt.

"I reckon *you* wuz created unto salvation?" suggested the rider bitterly.

"I hope so, Sledger," said the old man reverently.

After another space the horseman asked: "If I ain't got no control over my ac's, what makes you ast me not to cut no monkey shines aroun' yore house?"

Without having to wait a moment to assemble his answer the old theologian explained:

"You hev got control over yore ac's. You can ac' a gentleman if you so desire, but it won't do you no good in the hereafter. Some folks God foreordained to destruction before he laid the foundations of the yeth. What I ast you was a personal favor."

THE Boggus homestead was a great double-storied house of wasp-nest gray, stacked up rather like shattered boxes about two enormous open hallways, the one superimposed upon the other. The place had no sign of a porch. One climbed up into the great hall and was there. Here and there a plank had loosened and dropped out of the weather boarding, and a glance at the roof told that it leaked and no need of weather to prove it. In fact when a rain did come, there was a scurrying about the upper story with buckets and dishpans to protect the lower. The Boggus place was and still is rather an expression of Wayne County magnificence. To live there was to be something of a nabob. The son of such acres was "fixed" for life; the daughter was a "catch."

During the summer months the family life centered in the enormous unpainted lower hall, and the whole domestic economy was as frankly open to inspection as it would have been in the middle of the public road.

As Mr. Kinchin approached, he saw in the hallway the preacher, a girl in a red bodice and a green skirt, and a huge fat woman. The girl was hovering uncertainly in midhall, apparently about to pass from one room to another. The fat woman wore a huge faded Mother Hubbard and sat in a big split-bottom rocking-chair. She had her sleeves rolled up on her shapeless arms while she peeled peaches. The peaches she peeled with such enormous arms were a trifle larger than walnuts. In fact the peach orchard on the Boggus place had somehow taken "the littles." It was a county-wide complaint.

A young orchard, fresh from a northern nursery, would promise well for a year or two, but after it had been left for several seasons to prune itself, which it did by splitting out its own top from too heavy fruiting, and to spray itself and to fertilize itself, in which two last it failed altogether, it would very unaccountably take "the littles." This strange disease afflicted nearly every orchard in southern Wayne.

Mr. Boggus paged his guest from the gate as, "Ma, here comes young Sledger Kinchin; you ricollec', the boy the gran' jury chased out o' the county with a true bill ten year ago, well, this is him."

The heartiness of the introduction could not be questioned, but it left Mr. Kinchin

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advancing toward the house with a smile on his flushed face that could neither be altered nor removed.

The ponderous woman with the tiny peaches heaved herself by way of acknowledging Mr. Kinchin and relapsed into her great chair. "Of course I remember Grover Kinchin, pa," she exclaimed; then, after scrutinizing the boy as he came up the path, "Grover, you shore hev filled out."

Mr. Kinchin seized on this new topic with alacrity. "Yes, Miss Betty, I weigh right aroun' two hundred now." Here he nodded at the girl in the red bodice, said "Hidy—" hesitated a moment and added, "Emmy."

The girl in the blouse and green skirt giggled nervously and answered, "Hidy, Grover."

The fat woman chuckled in her depths. "That ain't Emmy, Grover. Em was married three year ago this comin' fall to Bill Bascom's boy, Lije. They're livin' over on Moccasin now. Lije and Em is doin' mighty well, too. Lije hez bought the old Brasheer place and hez got ten head o' hawgs, two mules sixteen han's high——"

The inventory became blurred in Mr. Kinchin's ears as he glanced as often as politeness would permit at the girl in the middle of the hallway. She seemed on the point of leaving the hall, and presently, to Mr. Kinchin's regret, she did move slowly into the room on the north side of the passage and closed the door behind her.

Mr. Kinchin turned impulsively to the fat woman as if some inhibition had been removed from his tongue. "Is that Euly May?"

"Naw, Euly May's teachin' over on Harrican. That's Lizzie Love."

"What, growed up like that?"

"She's seventeen," said the mother.

And Mr. Boggus added: "She's goin' to marry Brother McCall here next month. You know I wuz a-tellin' you about thet, Sledger, as we come on to the house."

"Yes, yes, so you wuz," agreed Mr. Kinchin rather hastily. He turned and looked for the first time at the minister.

Brother McCall was a long-faced man with jet black eyes and the thin compressed mouth of rural piety. As the drover looked at Lizzie Love's future husband he felt it incumbent upon him to make some remark, and he cleared his throat slightly and said, "Brother McCall, you shore air gittin' a fine chunk of a gal."

The minister agreed seriously. "The finest in the settlemint, Mr. Kinchin. I hope I'm worthy uv her."

"Why, the idee, Brother McCall!" cried the fat woman.

"I prayed over sich a union a long time, Sister Boggus, before I axed Brother Boggus fer Lizzie Love. An' I b'lieve God answered me and that He's a-goin' to bless us."

The parson's answer aroused a certain ghostly interest in Mr. Kinchin. "What did God's answer seem like, Brother McCall?"

"Hit was like a voice, not in my years, but in my heart, sayin', 'Montgomery McCall, go an' take the gal fer yore wife.' "

"It didn't say what gal?" asked the drover, oddly moved by this supernatural message.

"I wuz a-talkin' to God about Lizzie Love," explained the minister simply.

MR. BOGGUS was not greatly interested in this relation which he had heard a number of times, so he changed the topic with a loud:

"Now, Sledger, gittin' back to them cattle—jest what air you off'rin' fer cattle now?"

The drover gave up Parson McCall's ghostly conversation with God for the solider reality of cattle.

"Well, that's owin' to the grade, Mr. Boggus, whether they air feeders or grazers, and then—the health o' the cattle has somethin' to do with it."

"Well, my cattle's grazers, an' I'll sell 'em cheap to the right man."

"The right man?"

"Yeh, some feller as will git out into the hills an' gether 'em up hisse'f. I'm gittin' too ol' to be runnin' over the hills an' hollers after cattle, so I want to close out what I got an' quit."

The young man sat up straighter. "Well now, we ort to be able to make a dicker on a proposition like that."

"I think we ort, but you un'erstan' you'll haff to git them cattle up yorese'f."

"That'll be all right," assented Kinchin readily.

"With that un'erstan'in', whut's clear grazers wuth?"

"Well, *clear* grazers is wuth five an' a quarter, but——"

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"Now, now," interrupted the farmer irritably, "don't say it an' we'll stay better frien's. But fer argymint's sake, we'll say mine ain't clear grazers. I got nineteen in the hills an' that's countin' out some dead uns where we seen the buzzards circlin'. Now I'm goin' tuh make you a offer you cain't turn down. It's a offer you kin take or leave an' I'm not keerin' which. Now what do you say?" He waggled a gnarled forefinger impressively between the words of his price. "Ten—dollars—apiece."

The youth stared at this dramatic offer. "Ten dollars apiece—air they calves?"

"Two and three year old an' up."

"Well, they mus' be dyin'——"

The old farmer snorted. "One or two here an' there, but I'm makin' you a price you can allow a third of 'em to die an' still come off with money."

ANY trade creates a tension among the hill folk. The minister, the fat woman, and the old farmer were all staring silently at the sunburned drover. A little thrill went through Grover and his mind danced among probabilities. The old man appeared to be offering about four hundred dollars' worth of cattle for a hundred and ninety dollars. But the youth knew he was not doing that. Then what was he doing? The drover's heart beat as he tried to penetrate the old farmer's scheme.

At that moment the door of the north room opened again and Lizzie Love loitered out with an air of just passing through on an errand. Unconsciously young Kinchin looked at the girl in his uncertainty, and to his surprise, he thought he saw her give a faint nod. He turned to the farmer and closed sharply.

"I'll take ye."

"And good riddance," declared Mr. Boggus in a relieved tone; "but it is clearly understood, Sledger, that you air to git them cattle up yorese'f."

"Shore, shore," agreed the young man easily.

"An' I reckon you'll agree to a time limit to git 'em in—it ortn't to take you more'n two or three days——"

"Why, no! One day'll be all I——"

At that moment his eyes were caught by Lizzie Love, who had drifted into the doorway of the south room. She was concealed from all except Grover and now she was frowning sharply, shaking her head at the youth and pursing her lips into a negative mouth. The next moment she disappeared into the dark interior.

Her unexpected warning set up a sharp titillation in the drover's chest. Mr. Boggus was continuing warmly. "Now if it's un'erstood you're to git 'em out an' off my han's by day arter termorrow, I reckon you can pay me the money and the preacher's the witness, an' we'll call it a trade."

Mr. Kinchin groped wildly for some possible clue to Lizzie Love's negation. He felt sure she had some serious reason for her mute advice. But he could not guess it and his hundred and ninety dollars were departing from him. He felt weak. He made a desperate effort to think of some reason for rescinding his trade, but found none. All the thousand and one objections which a cattle buyer can usually summon out of nothingness deserted him.

"Come over here and witness the count, Brother McCall," said the farmer.

Brother McCall got slowly to his feet. He and the drover walked over together; then the minister stood watching with expressionless black eyes as Kinchin told off nineteen greasy ten-dollar bills. It took about a third of his sheaf. A certain wrinkling in the grooves of the old hill man's face told that he was pleased.

"The cattle's yores," he said simply, "an' you're to git 'em up in two days—that was the un'erstan'in', wasn't it, Brother McCall?"

"That was it," nodded the preacher.

"Sure, that's it," swallowed Grover. He moistened his dry mouth. He knew from this particularity that somehow he had been trapped, that his money was gone, that there was some kind of joker in the trade. A weak feeling shook his knees and he wondered desperately what Lizzie Love had meant.

At that moment the girl appeared in the doorway with two enormous wooden pails over her arms. The drover turned to her with a thrill of relief.

"Goodness! Lizzie Love, you cain't tote them great big buckets. Here, give 'em to me."

Lizzie Love began saying that she brought water from the spring every day but the youth already had the pails and the two got down the hall steps and went hurrying

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along the path that led down under the hill. The moment they were out of sight and hearing of the house, Kinchin said:

"Lizzie Love, what did you mean, shakin' yore head at me?"

The girl turned to him, evidently under a strain herself. "Oh, Grover—you didn't pay him, did you?"

"Why, yes, I had to. I didn't know what to say."

"An' you agreed to git 'em up by yorese'f?"

"Yeh, but that ain't nothin'."

"Nothin'! Nothin'!" cried the girl tragically. "It means yore money's gone. Why, Grover, them cattle's as wild as deer. You kin run yore hoss tuh death and never git a single one in the barnyard. Why, pap's been sellin' them cattle all year to fust one buyer an' another'n, with the un'-'erstan'in' they must ketch 'em. An' they ain't been but two caught! Why, Sledger, he's sold 'em as low as two dollar an' a half apiece. He allus tells the man he's too old to run 'em hisse'f, an' wants to quit the cattle business. . . ."

Lizzie Love's voice was tearful with sympathy. Mr. Kinchin stared at her. "Why, I b'lieve I kin ketch 'em," he ventured.

The girl shook her head. "They all b'lieve thet."

"Well, it ain't half as bad as I thought it wuz, Lizzie Love," he said in much better spirits. "An' I shore am obleeged to ye fer tryin' to stave me off'n a bad trade."

"Oh, that wuzn't nothin'," replied the girl who was reassured herself by the drover's returning confidence.

"Well, it wuz too," declared the youth awkwardly. "When I lef' Texas, I didn't expect to fin' many frien's back here—I didn't leave many—but I shore am glad I found one."

This open speaking of friendship had an effect of quieting Lizzie Love. She walked on in silence for a space and presently said in a slightly accusing tone:

"You didn't know me even if I am yore frien'. You thought I wuz Emmy, an' then you thought I was Euly May."

"Well, Lizzie Love," explained Mr. Kinchin apologetically, "you wuz jest a little tad runnin' aroun' here when I lef' the country, no mo' like what you air now than a hossfly's like a redbird."

Mr. Kinchin's simile may not have had many points of resemblance, but it affected Lizzie Love pleasurably. She colored faintly, and after a moment said, "I knowed you the minute I laid eyes on you."

"You did?"

"Yes, an' I knowed where you had gone to all this time, too."

"You knowed I'd gone tuh Texas?"

"Yes, I did."

"What made you know that?"

"'Cause you allus seemed so—well, so sorter brash an' bold I jest knowed you'd go to Texas an' lasso cattle and kill Indians an' find gold mines."

Mr. Kinchin stared at the girl in amazement. "Well, I declare, jest think o' that!"

The drover's reaction was so simple and amazed that the girl was encouraged to go on in quite a feather.

"Yes, an' on rainy nights I could jest see you sleepin' out on the wild pu-ray-ree and the wolves howlin' aroun' yuh. An' *three times* I dreamp I wuz a-ridin' behin' you escapin' frum the Indians."

Mr. Kinchin was wonder-struck. "Well, I wonder what in the worl' that dream meant?"

"I went right to the almanac an' foun' out," announced Lizzie Love triumphantly; "it said to dream of riding on a hoss meant an onexpected gift."

"Well, I declare—did you git anything?"

"No," said Lizzie Love, "it jest *meant* that."

"I see," said Mr. Kinchin thoughtfully.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Freud and his revealing theory were as far removed from Mr. Grover Kinchin and Miss Lizzie Love Boggus as the stars are removed from the bottom of the sea, still Lizzie Love's thinking of him and dreaming of him touched Mr. Kinchin in a queer way. Because of these dreams, the two went on down to the spring wrapped in a vague and pleasant intimacy.

At the spring Mr. Kinchin dipped his pails while Lizzie Love peered into the cold pool for "watter dawgs," slimy little monsters of a glistening mottled brown which were always rather fearful to catch. As she stooped a curl of her hair fell down past her cheek and across her neck.

And a queer thing happened to the drover as he looked up at her from filling his buckets. A thrill ran through him. He

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became strangely aware, for the first time, of the sunshine splashing down through the beech trees over the girl and the pool which reflected her red bodice and falling hair. It seemed to Mr. Kinchin that this light which he saw somehow radiated from Lizzie Love herself, that she had become self-luminous. Some such feeling may lie at the bottom of the legend that saints wear halos.

At any rate Mr. Kinchin blurted out, "And you remembered me all this time, ever sence you wuz seven year old!" He was amazed that his image should have had a niche in such a shrine.

Lizzie Love looked up in her search after water dogs. "An' you forgot all about me."

"Oh, no, I didn't," declared the drover.

"You say that—an' didn't know me!"

"I cain't ricollec' you as a young un," hesitated the cattle buyer, "but, Lizzie Love, when I look at you now, it seems like I've knowed you jest as you air all my life long."

"That cain't be, Grover," cried the girl; "I ain't old enough fer thet."

"That's the curi's thing about it," explained Kinchin earnestly; "hit seems like I've knowed you all my life long an' didn't know hit wuz you tull right this minute."

"Knowed me an' didn't know hit wuz me!"

"That's right."

"Grover Kinchin—air you goin' deranged?"

He took the question with perfect seriousness. "I don't think I am, Lizzie Love; I feel all right."

Mr. Kinchin's extraordinary mental condition fascinated the girl and also the drover himself. They sat down on a bank of moss and the girl probed endlessly into this strange retroactive memory of Mr. Kinchin's. They talked and talked. Their colloquy might very well have lasted till sundown had not a rumbling in the hills broken it up.

"Why, that's thunder," cried the girl, jumping up. "It's goin' tuh rain at last. Well, I'm glad o' thet."

The drover went to the spring and picked up his buckets. The thunder might have been the signal to set them moving. On the way back up to the house Lizzie Love tried to take one of the pails as her share of the burden. In her efforts to get it from the drover they spilled some water over both and this was extremely funny. Everything was gay and funny. They climbed back up the path in a gust of spirits such as the drover, certainly, and perhaps Lizzie Love had never felt before.

But when they turned the corner and saw the immense fat woman peeling the tiny peaches, and the farmer smoking, and the preacher staring across the hills with his coal-black eyes; when they saw these elders, the spirits of the water carriers sunk, as youth's gaiety must always sink before age. The glister of the sun vanished; wet clothes ceased to be amusing. The world became old and dull again because dull and elderly folk were looking on it.

The fat woman spoke, "Wuzn't thet thunder I heared?" and her leathered husband said, "I b'lieve it wuz."

Mrs. Boggus heaved herself out of her armchair and Mr. Boggus arose as if the thunder had somehow set them also about their duties.

Kinchin gave the buckets of water to Lizzie Love and said he would go and see about his horse. The collie lay asleep in the shadow of the house. The drover sucked his lips at her. She opened an eye, stretched herself, bit at a flea through the coat of beggar lice, then followed her master toward the lot.

Mr. Kinchin took his collie down to the stable yard, turned her inside and then said in the urgent aspirate a man uses to a dog, "Find 'em, Lou; hunt 'em up, gal!"

She came out of her lethargy, pricked up her ears and began trotting about over the the lot sniffing at the cow tracks and at the dried manure. Presently she whined at her master. Mr. Kinchin motioned in the general direction of the circling buzzards. "Go git 'em, girl," he aspirated. "Go after 'em."

Lou galloped out of the gate as if on some certain errand. The drover went to the fence and looked after her down the rocky lane. There was a touch of pathos about the dog, her smallness and shabbiness pitted against the rocky lane, the fields and the immensity of the hills. Mr. Kinchin watched her go until she became a mere glimmer of movement far down the lane. Then he went to the stable, fed his horse and retraced his steps to the house.

THE voice of Lizzie Love calling impersonally, "You all kin come on," told Mr. Kinchin that supper was ready. He found Mr. Boggus and the preacher

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just washing their faces and hands preparatory to entering the kitchen.

The kitchen itself was dark and overpoweringly hot. Mother and daughter were awaiting the men-folk. The fat woman looked as if she had been dipped in water. She waddled about the kitchen in a great shaking mass. Lizzie Love herself was damp. A strand of her hair was plastered against her cheek and the turn of her neck, but oddly enough, instead of displeasing the drover, this had a curious suggestion of intimacy that made his heart beat fast.

The men seated themselves in strained silence. The minister said a rather long grace and pronounced the words so rapidly that only snatches of it were intelligible. The concluding "Amen" and the turning over of his plate were, one might say, a single movement. Neither of the two women sat at the table with the men. The huge wife stood by the stove frying something. Lizzie Love came and went from table to stove offering hot biscuits. The Reverend McCall said he thought it would rain before morning. Mr. Boggus said it would take a good season to save the corn now, as it was already twistin'.

THE drover followed hardly any of this conversation. He was aware mainly of Lizzie Love. Every time she passed behind his chair he could feel her presence as clearly as if she wore about her a field of force and it dragged across his naked back. Each time she passed he wished that she would pause there, but she never did. The fact that he sat with his back to Lizzie Love annoyed Mr. Kinchin. He thought to himself: "I won't get to see her at all. By the time she eats and gets the dishes cleaned up it will be bedtime." The extreme heat of the kitchen oppressed the young man. The minister inspired Grover with distaste, because of the manner in which he ate.

The minister ate whole-heartedly, picking up the pieces of fried chicken in his fingers, biting off the flesh and now and then cracking a bone in his teeth and sucking out the marrow. He turned his head this way and that to get at it better. He had a pile of bones on his plate. He poured his coffee in his saucer, lifted it with a good deal of skill and drank in audible suckings.

When supper was finished and the men escaped from the extreme heat of the kitchen, they found the hallway swept by a wind chilled by some distant rain. The spirits of Mr. Boggus and the minister rose at once. Mr. Boggus plucked a straw from a broom as he passed into the hall. When he reached his chair he sat down, and began picking his teeth with the straw. He winked at the preacher.

"Well, Sledger," he began in a quizzical tone, "you shore hev made a wonderful trade in them cattle you bought off'n me."

"Jest how, Mr. Boggus?" asked the young man absently.

The old farmer winked at the preacher again. "I'm calculatin' you paid a hundred an' ninety dollars fer so much wind in the woods, Sledger."

"What do you mean?" asked Grover uncomfortably, and knowing what he did mean.

"I mean, Sledger, you've got jest as good a chanst to round up the shadders of them turkey buzzards yander as to round up them cattle o' mine." All this was said in a voice more and more shaken with internal laughter. "Sledger, you shore ain't got a cobbler's chanst. Hey! Hey, Brother McCall, this is one o' them Texas cattle men come to Wayne County to skin us pore farmers." And he flung back his head and guffawed at the ceiling.

Mr. Boggus had what they call "the laff" on Kinchin. Among the hill folk a trade is a blood brother to a practical joke. Any sort of swindle, deceit, surprise, stratagem is allowable in a trade provided the trader adheres to certain rules of verbal truthfulness. The more outrageous the cheat a seller perpetrates the better business man he is and the more he will boast of the exploit. In Wayne County it is shameful to be bitten, but it is honorable to bite. "*Caveat emptor*": "Let the buyer beware."

And Mr. Boggus flung back his head and creaked with laughter and slapped his legs. This laughter was, one might say, Mr. Boggus's unearned increment.

Even the melancholy preacher was forced to smile at such a droll pass. "I guess you will hev trouble gittin' them cattle, Brother Kinchin. Brother Boggus has already sold them cattle to four or five buyers—which is he, Brother Boggus, the fourth or the fifth?"

Old man Boggus was holding his sides in genuine physical pain. "The f-f-fifth; ef

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I ain't sol' them cattle five times, s-so h-he'p me!" And he went off again.

Dismay filled the drover as he watched the convulsed farmer and the irrepressible grins on the face of the parson. "Look here," he stammered at last, "i-is there nineteen head o' them cattle in the hills?"

Mr. Boggus became sober on the instant. "Look here," he said severely, "you don't imagine I would misrepresent anything in a trade, do you, Sledger?"

The drover was taken aback. "Well—no-o; but how do you know there are nineteen and them dyin' like they air?"

"I count 'em when they come up fer salt. I *said* nineteen, but it's likelier there is twenty-two or -three. I figgered off six fer buzzards' bait, but I'll g'ar'ntee they ain't six dead. Howsomever, I'm willin' to sacrifice a little money an' stick to the truth, Sledger. Money ain't all they is in this world."

The preacher was moved to speak on this congenial topic: "I don't reckon you'll fin' a honester man in Wayne County than Brother Boggus, Brother Kinchin. I don't believe he would misrepresent a single thing fer no earthly reward. I consider him the most consecrated layman I ever met in all my ministerin'."

Mr. Kinchin himself was impressed by this earnest praise. There was no questioning the perfect sincerity of the two men. At the very lowest reckoning there were nineteen head of cattle out in the hills somewhere—cattle that couldn't be caught.

Although Lizzie Love had told Mr. Kinchin the very same tale, when the girl told it the drover had felt quite confident that his collie would bring up the cattle. Now he was equally confident she would not. Such is the force of sympathy. The cattle buyer grew bluer and bluer. A hundred and ninety dollars gone. That was about a third of his money.

IF THE truth must be told the loss of this money was a keener thrust than the vague and unaccountable melancholy set up by Lizzie Love. For the money was solid and real, whereas Lizzie Love seemed nebulous and dreamy. When Lizzie Love married the minister, Mr. Kinchin would not lose anything he had ever possessed; quite possibly, he would not lose anything he ever could have possessed. But a hundred and ninety dollars out of his wallet—that was bad.

Just then Lizzie Love herself came into the hallway, dabbing at her flushed face with a powder-puff. She glanced about the passage and her eyes traveled past the minister and settled on the drover.

Mr. Boggus got up at once and suggested to Kinchin that they go out and feed the stock. The drover said he had already fed his nag. The minister volunteered to go. Mr. Boggus told him to stay where it was cool; then turned to Kinchin, "You come along with me, Sledger," he said with heavy determination in his voice. "I want to show you my Durocs."

The drover glanced haplessly at Lizzie Love. The minister was drawing two chairs close together in the hallway. Lizzie Love stood glancing sidewise at young Kinchin and biting her lower lip. Mr. Boggus stood his ground solidly, waiting for his guest. At last Grover followed. When the two had withdrawn some little distance from the house the farmer said in a lowered tone, "You see, I was wantin' fer us to git away an' give Lizzie Love an' her preacher a chanst to spark a little—the nights air so short."

AN UNUTTERABLE despondency settled on Grover. "Oh, was that it?" he mumbled, and followed the old farmer to see the Durocs.

Mr. Boggus strung out his feeding interminably. Rural courtesy demanded that Grover help him. The youth carried baskets of corn among the stalls, breaking the ears in the troughs. Each trough was a log hollowed out, and its sides were polished by the rubbing of endless cattle.

The tormenting scene of two figures sitting in the hallway beset Grover's eyes. A perfectly unreasonable wrath rose up in him against the girl, predicated somehow upon her laughter and charm for him at the spring. He held these two points against her with an intensity which a civilized man could not even imagine. As he broke the ears in the troughs, he fancied that he was somehow breaking the perfidious Lizzie Love.

It was dusk when Mr. Boggus made an end to his feeding. A wet wind was blowing steadily out of the east and the whole countryside rang with frogs. From far

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and near came the sharp trilling of frogs. "*T-r-r-r, T-r-r-r!*" in every key and cadence. What endless high tremolos stabbing the cool air, "*T-r-r-r, T-r-r-r!*" Grotesque little topers guzzling the east wind, and what a drinking song!

"I shore hope that rain won't blow aroun' this settlemint," said Mr. Boggus as they went back to the house.

Mr. Boggus invited the cattle buyer through the darkening hall into the living-room. They passed the engaged couple in silence and with an effect of complicity in evil doing.

The drover was so angry at the false Lizzie Love that he was glad not to spend the hour or two before bedtime with her. He thought to himself he would not sit out there with her if he could. He was just as independent as she was. Every hill lover, in the slightest degree miffed by his lady, boils with an irrational "independence."

The Boggus living-room was still hot with the air of noon day. A small lamp with a blue glass bowl gave forth a feeble yellow glow. Mrs. Boggus was already inside, enduring that curious incarceration of hill parents during the courtship of their daughters.

Mr. Boggus fumbled around in a corner of the living-room and presently produced a home-made checkerboard with buttons for counters. He pulled up chairs and invited Grover to a game.

The goal of checkers in Wayne County is not only to defeat an opponent, but also to laugh at him. The idea is to make that laughter as roaring and sardonic as possible. It requires a man in perfect spirits and well grounded in all the Christian virtues to lose a game of checkers amiably in Wayne County.

After some five minutes of play, the hill man observed: "Well, well, Sledger, yore game is stoopendous. Jest when you got my men scattered so you could ketch 'em, why yore own men give out!" The old farmer roared with laughter. "Sledger, don't you ever let the fool killer see you playin' this game, lad, or yore life wouldn't be wuth shotgun waddin'." He guffawed again.

The men were rearranged and the farmer, perfectly sure of winning now, attacked Mr. Kinchin's morale with a barrage of rural witticisms. Mrs. Boggus, who was watching the game and laughing, asked to play against Grover. Seats were exchanged. Mrs. Boggus played almost silently with an occasional submerged chuckle but the results were the same.

The drover tried to keep his attention fixed on his game, but found himself perpetually straining his ears toward the dark hallway. Sometimes he would altogether forget to move and then come to himself with a start and move planlessly, to the scorn of his hosts.

There was a wind blowing now, banging things about in the darkness. And troops of the most depressing emotions came drifting through Grover's head.

Apparently the Bogguses never wearied of whisking his feeble forces from the field. Game after game and the wind rose; there came the sound of tin things being blown about, interspersed with nerve-racking silences from the dark hallway.

At some period of the unhappy play Mr. Boggus was saying, "Sledger, when you cut yorese'f out fer a cattle buyer an' a checker player, you spiled a mighty good pattern fer a cotton hoer."

This was an ancient and a merry gibe. The hill folk have reconciled the contradictory virtues of politeness and sincerity by habitually saying exactly what they think of a person under the guise of a jest.

MR. KINCHIN could endure it no longer. He got up abruptly. "Oh, well, I cain't play checkers tonight," he said roughly; "I'm bothered."

"What bothered ye, yore cattle-buyin'?" Mr. Boggus winked at his wife.

"I guess it wuz my cattle-buyin'." Grover stood in the dim light with a certain pathos in his face. Now that he was on his feet he hardly knew what to do.

Mr. Boggus laughed a trifle more considerately. "Oh, well," he philosophized, "somebody loses in every trade an' game. Cain't both win. An' a man stan's the gaff without a whimper, Sledger. That's life fer a rale man, Sledger, stan'in' the gaff without a whimper."

A far tinny rattling became audible in the blowing night and interrupted Mr. Boggus's moralizing. It was an extraordinary rattling which grew gradually into a flat clattering and clanking as if a hundred broken bells were being bumped along over stones.

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Mr. Boggus got to his feet. "Ma!" he exclaimed. "What's thet?"

In the midst of this cacophony of bells came the sound of bellowing and the faint but constant barking of a dog. Old Mr. Boggus started for the door.

"Ma! What in thunderation's broke loose!"

The drover recognized Lou's tongue. "It's them cattle!" he whooped, leaping past the farmer out into the dark hallway. "Them cattle's come up!"

And from complete darkness he heard Lizzie Love's voice with a joyful break in it. "Oh, Grover, *her* they come up!"

The cattle buyer ran on through the hall out into the yard into the faint glimmer of a new moon hanging low in the west. After him came Mr. Boggus, Lizzie Love and the preacher and, somewhat later, Mrs. Boggus, poising her bulk on each step as she climbed down it.

The faint moonlight glimmered on a lane filled with moving shadows with the horns and heads of cattle dimly seen against this indistinct background. As the cattle pressed against the gate their bells kept up a din.

"What made 'em come up like that!" shouted the old farmer in despair. "Why, the blame fool cattle, they never acted this way before!"

"Why, his dawg!" cried Lizzie Love.

Mrs. Boggus, who came trundling down from the rear, keened: "His dawg! His dawg! Who ever heared of sich a thing!"

But now that the attention of the crowd was called to it, all could plainly hear the monotonous yipping of the collie beyond the cattle in the lane.

Mr. Kinchin went flying down to the gate, unchained it, applied his shoulder to it, for the bottom hinge was gone, and walked about with it until it was open. One or two cows snorted at him, then the whole herd flowed past him away from the keener danger of the yipping outside.

Kinchin shut the gate and his collie came up to him with the drooping head and tail of an exhausted dog. The drover was overjoyed. He reached down and caught the burry head in his hands and pressed it against his knees.

"Oh, you gal!" he said roughly, in the voice a man uses to love his dog. "You lallapaloosa go-git-'em! The finest bitch in Ameriky!" He patted her flank heavily.

This was the collie's exceeding great reward. She waggled her tired tail, made a lick up at her master's face and lay down at his feet utterly exhausted.

Mr. Boggus, the minister and Lizzie Love were looking at master and servant.

"Look here," cried the farmer. "What'll you take fer that dog, Sledger? By Gad, I'll give—I'll give ye haff yore money back——"

Mr. Kinchin straightened and burst into Homeric laughter. "Haff my money back an' she jest made me three hundred dollars clear! Haff! Why, blame it, man, yore whole little ol' shoe-string farm wouldn't buy her!" He roared again, filled with the recovery of his money and the sweetness of his revenge.

"He's got you there, Brother Boggus," said the preacher impersonally.

"But how in tarnation did she know which was my cattle?" marveled the farmer.

"Why, she smelt aroun' the pen here before she started," said Grover with a chuckle, "an' I'll vence she's got ever' one that belongs to yuh—here, let's count 'em an' see."

The men counted them as best they could in the uncertain light. The drover made it twenty-four, the farmer twenty-five and the preacher twenty-three.

While the counting was in progress, Lou sniffed discreetly at the fat woman. Mrs. Boggus made a violent gesture at the animal.

"You no-'count dirty slut! Git away frum here!" She even essayed a kick, and almost upset herself. This outburst had no connection whatever with the loss of the cattle. It was the instinctive hatred of all hill women for all dogs. Merely to see a dog makes a hill woman furious; merely to see a hill woman makes a hill dog yelp and flee the wrath to come.

WHEN the marvel of the returned cattle was over, the group went back into the house. By that time the moon was dropping into the west, a thin crescent of silver magnified by a distant fringe of trees on the western hills. Up from the east came clouds looking like an old-fashioned wagon cover being drawn over the world. The east wind was now cold and blew wetly against their faces.

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Mr. Boggus surmised that it must be eight o'clock, late bedtime. When they reached the house hosts and guests went sleepily to their rooms. Lizzie Love gave the drover and the preacher a candle and directed them up a stairway let in between two downstairs rooms. This stairway emptied in an upstairs bedroom.

This guest chamber contained a huge double stuffed feather bed, an unpainted table, two chairs, a pitcher of water and a wavering mirror hung over the table. The air in the room was violently hot from the beating of the sun on the roof. Only one small window set high could have given any ventilation. This was tightly shut to exclude the unhealthful night air.

The men sat down in the faint candlelight and pulled off their shoes. Then they stood up and removed their trousers, which finished their preparations for bed.

By now Mr. Kinchin had suffered a reaction from his triumphs, and he answered the minister's bedtime conversation in monosyllables. His anger at Lizzie Love returned. The coming profit on his cattle lost its glow. It would mean merely so much more money, so many more bills in his wallet.

Mr. Kinchin climbed up into the thick hot feather bed with a feeling of the futility of money. He chose the preferred front side and stretched himself uncomfortably under the sheet. He lay looking at the minister with distaste.

THE preacher knelt by the bedside and prayed audibly. He prayed for the Bogguses, for Mr. Kinchin, his bedfellow, and asked God to give him what was good for him. He prayed especially for Lizzie Love, who was about to become his wife. Thence his petition spread to the congregation that would hear him preach on the morrow, to the sick of the neighborhood. He prayed that rain might come and bless the farmers' crops, that God might bestow his blessings on all. When he made an end of his prayer he asked Grover if he were ready for him to blow out the candle. The drover, who was hating the man of God intensely at that moment, said shortly that he was.

The minister blew out the candle and a little later the cow buyer could feel him crawling over him to his place at the back of the bed. The drover detested both the odor and the touch of the man. He could hardly control himself from giving the preacher's groping hands a little shrug with his shoulder, a wriggle to let him know how he detested him; but he did not.

The darkness was absolute. The air was hot, stale, scented with shoes, and the faint smell of burnt tallow from the extinguished candle. Outside the cold wind whipped and roared, but it was effectually excluded from the bedroom in order to protect the health of the occupants.

Within a few minutes the preacher dropped off to sleep. The drover could tell this from his breathing. Young Mr. Kinchin himself was so uncomfortable and miserable that he wondered how the minister could get to sleep so quickly. He thought perhaps he slept in the Peace of God—well, the Peace of God was a long, long way from the drover.

The cattle buyer rolled and tossed and threshed his big sweaty body about. His drawers stuck to his legs and he would pull them loose in a sort of desperation.

HIS thoughts threshed about quite as helplessly as his body. He was miserable and pestered. Nothing helped him. The exorbitant profit he would make on his cattle now seemed to him entirely without advantage. It would mean more money, more bills in his wallet—what of that? Of what earthly benefit would it be to his real life to have his wallet grow thicker and bulkier? Lord, his real life was not in his wallet!

And now indeed, from this dark angle in the Boggus house in the midst of a blustery night, it seemed to him that his whole life had been futile and pointless, and no stuffing of his wallet with bills would remedy it.

He looked at himself. He was here tonight. Tomorrow he would drive his cattle across the quarantine and spend the night in Florence. Then he would put them on a train for Memphis, and so on and on, night after night. He would be here and there in his lonely and pointless migrations and all that he did, all that he gained would have no meaning. His life would be a sort of stringing together of futilities—as it had been.

He tossed feverishly among the hot feathers. "Oh, good God," he thought, "they ain't no sense to what I'm doin'.

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Tradin' an' traffickin' fer a little money, with spells of gittin' drunk an' gamblin' an' raisin' hell—they jest ain't no sense a-tall to me." Tears came to the cattle buyer's eyes, and that was the way he said his prayers.

A sudden spattering of rain on the roof interrupted the reproach of his thoughts. The rain grew swiftly heavier and louder until it filled the whole night with its uproar. It boomed and assailed the old house and amidst the roaring the sharp staccato *click-click-click* of leaks in the roof began to develop.

The noise of the rain was so great that the minister aroused himself long enough to say, "The Lord is shorely blessin' our settlemint with a good season, Brother Kinchin." Then he immediately went back to sleep again.

The drip of the leaky roof gave the drover a peculiar, chilly feeling. He lay straining his ears, trying to locate the exact spots when a tiny beam of light played through the cracks of the door.

Mr. Kinchin lifted his head, opened his mouth and listened intently. Through some prescience his heart began to beat. He saw the door open very slowly, he heard the rattle of tin; then a girl's head with the hair down, an abnormous shape in the candlelight, peered into the room. Then Lizzie Love barely whispered, "Is anybody awake?"

The drover drew in his breath. "I'm awake," he returned in the same tone.

The girl lowered her voice still more. "Is he?"

"No."

Lizzie Love's tones seemed breaking under some strong excitement. "Here are—some buckets—to put under the drips."

"I'll come git 'em!"

The drover slid out of bed with a silent movement. He jerked on his trousers in the darkness. He hurried with every nerve a-stretch for fear the girl would be gone. He watched the ray of light breathlessly. It did not move. When he got to the door Lizzie Love waited with the buckets. The sight of her face, her flowing hair, sent a queer intimate tremor through the drover. Instead of handing him the vessels when he appeared in the doorway, Lizzie Love gasped out:

"Oh, Grover, dad's phoned the inspector!"

The cattle buyer stood staring at her. "What d'ye mean?"

"Dad—Dad's phoned the tick inspector. He's goin' to git here in the mornin' by gray daylight an' levy on all yore cattle fer goin' ag'inst the tick regerlations."

"The hell he is!" gasped the buyer blankly.

"Yes, 'n' you'd better clear out o' here right this minute," warned Lizzie Love with big eyes. "Oh, I was jest wonderin' how I could come up an' tell ye, when it 'gin tuh rain an' I thought of the leaks."

"Wait, you wait here a minute, Lizzie Love!" The drover strode noiselessly back into the room, put on his coat, picked up his shoes and assured himself that the preacher still slept. He returned to the stairway. "Now le's git down."

THE girl went down first, holding the candle above her head. It illuminated her bare arm and rough young hand and silhouetted her hair and shoulder. When they stepped into the lower hallway the wind abruptly blew the candle out. Lizzie Love had foreseen this and had placed a lighted lantern at the bottom of the steps. Both were working swiftly to save the cattle now.

"I laid my slicker down here in the hall somewhere," said the drover, groping after it through the blowing mist of the rain.

"You'll haff to git yore cattle acrost Big Cypress before it gits swimmin'," warned Lizzie Love sotto voce, "or you'll never git into Alabam'."

Mr. Kinchin stopped to put on his shoes, for the floor of the hall was wet. Then he peered about, found his slicker where it had been blown down the passage. He put the wet garment on. He looked again about the hallway.

"Where's Lou?" he asked.

"Who?"

"My dog."

"I don't know."

"She ort to be here in the hall; she usually sneaks into the house when she can."

Both looked over the empty hallway, but saw only the two chairs sitting close together.

"Good Lord!" groaned the drover. "I cain't turn a wheel without her—I daresn't call her——"

The girl started looking about with the

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lantern and the drover followed her. But it was with a miserable sinking in his heart, for two chairs had reminded him that he was going away from Lizzie Love to see her no more. This girl who had dreamed of him, and who had warned him against the inspector, and was now hunting his dog with a lantern, she would go out of his life and certainly he would never see her again. And his years would string out in endless futilities and have no reason to them at all. And he followed the girl, shivering and miserable as though he had an ague.

Lizzie Love went ahead searching for the dog and presently she saw the kitchen door ajar. With a farm woman's instinct she quickened her steps. The drover followed. They entered the door almost together. The girl held the lantern up in the hot kitchen and suddenly gave a little cry of rage.

"You triflin' dawg! Eatin' thet chicken!" She darted forward to rescue the fowl she and her mother had dressed for breakfast.

The man pushed after her, reached for her.

"Let her have it, Lizzie Love," he cried; "the pore thing must be nearly starved!"

"Have it!" cried the girl. "Have the chicken!" She seized a broom from behind the door and made a lunge at Lou.

The man snapped out a "Damn it!" leaped forward, flung his arms about her. The girl made a furious struggle to wield the broom. The drover crushed her to him. Then as he struggled to protect his dog the feel of the girl's soft body in his arms swiftly changed the whole motive of the struggle. Kinchin had been trying not to use strength enough to hurt her. Now he whirled her roughly about and pressed her body hard against his own. His hand in the masses of her hair suddenly forced her mouth to his.

At the rough embrace the girl gasped, her broom and lantern clattered to the floor. Her knees wavered under her so that she was half clinging to him and half supported by him. Her arms tightened convulsively about his neck and she began sobbing.

"Oh! Oh, Grover, d-don't leave me! Don't let me stay here! Dear, dear Grover, I cain't stan' it!"

In the faint yellow light of the overturned lantern, the drover and the girl clung to each other with pounding hearts and sobbing incoherent words. The rain beat at the small window set high in the wall. The dog bolted the remnants of the chicken in huge gulps with her eyes rolled fearfully toward the woman.

Coming in January

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The fun of doing business in China

The Log — By Edwina Levin MacDonald
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January *EVERYBODY'S*—out December 15th

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A Romance of Maximilian's Mexico

Kildare of the Border

Kildare, on Duty in Old Mexico, Is Drawn Deeply into the Meshes of the Web That Rayon, with His Wild Dreams, Is Weaving

By John T. McIntyre

Author of "Blowing Weather"

Illustrated by Charles Hargens

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

IN THE Hotel Europe in the City of Mexico, Tom Kildare, who had ridden the border trails, who, of late, had fought under General Philip Sheridan —and still, for that matter, was under that redoubtable soldier—felt trouble brewing.

He was in the capital of Maximilian, that toy emperor who had been set up, while north of the Rio Grande the United States, torn by internal war, was helpless to interfere, by the unworthy bearer of a great name, Napoleon III. He did not greatly like the company in which he found himself.

Officers, French, Belgian, Austrian, abounded. All were quarrelsome; contemptuous of the country; prone, too, when not disputing among themselves, to address insulting remarks to the Americans of the north. There were Mexicans, too—such as Colonel Rayon, whom he had known, once, in the old St. Joe days—before Rayon had risen to a high place in this mushroom empire, with his dream of restoring to Mexico California, Texas, and other territory ceded to the United States at various times.

He had had passages with Rayon before; notably at Espirito Santo, that sink-hole of the border, when he had had a part in rescuing from Rayon's designs the niece of Simon Prentiss, commercial adventurer of the border in the old days, exploiter of the Confederacy during the war, contractor now—at a handsome profit—in this same City of Mexico.

He knew, too, the woman with Rayon—that beautiful adventuress from whose glances, years before, he had turned with an indifference she had never forgiven. Theresa Reuchard tried to check Rayon as he moved toward Kildare, but in vain.

Rayon looked at her, and smiled coldly.

"I shall be in no danger. You may depend upon that."

The Mexican approached Kildare; he stood beside the small table, and the Celt looked up at him.

"Well, señor," said Rayon, "we meet again."

Kildare regarded him good-humoredly.

"So it seems, divil take the luck!" said he. "God save us, the small calamities of life never let us slip by."

The insolent eyes of Rayon kept their steady stare; his voice was low-pitched and menacing as he went on.

"You are one of those who interfere, señor," he said. "You are what the English call a spoil-sport. Cannot a gentleman arrange a little rendezvous, but one of

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your kind must step in and ruin it?" Still the voice was low; neither Duroc nor Theresa Reuchard could catch the words. "What was it to you if a brawling brother protested? That the lady did not object should have been enough for any man."

Kildare got up; the good humor was gone from his face; there was a glint like ice in his eye.

"That you put a foul word upon a girl who, one look should show, is as spotless as an angel, fixes you forever in my estimation, señor, if such fixing were needed." Kildare's arm came around with a snap, his palm struck the Mexican full in the face.

Rayon, cold and with gleaming eyes, stood looking at Kildare; those in the garden of the Hotel Europe pressed forward.

"For that blow, señor," spoke the Mexican, "I'll have your life!"

"Sure, every man is privileged to try what he can do," replied Kildare. He stood with apparent carelessness, his thumbs hooked in his belt, but the trained observer would have seen that the carelessness was more apparent than real; and also that one of the hands was close to the butt of his Colt's forty-five.

Duroc came forward.

"I trust," said he, to Rayon, "I can be of some service. I am somewhat experienced in matters of this kind."

"I put myself in your hands," said the Mexican quietly.

KILDARE looked surprised. "A duel!" said he. Then he gestured carelessly. "It's all one to me. If you are of that mind, faith, let's have it, by all means."

Duroc looked at Kildare.

"Will you be so good," said he, "as to give me the name of a friend with whom I can make the necessary arrangements?"

Kildare frowned and looked puzzled.

"Divil take me," said he, one hand stroking his chin, "but that will be a job, so it will. Sure, I haven't a friend in all Mexico."

A little knot of men in Confederate gray sat at a table near by; and now one of them, a fine upstanding young fellow with a frank, pleasant face, arose and stepped forward.

"Sir," said he, to Kildare, with a smile, "we are late opponents, but if I may offer my services——"

The Federal trooper gripped his hand.

"Why, then," said Kildare, "it warms the heart of me, so it do, to have you speak out in that fine, friendly fashion. I thank you."

"My name is Glade," said the young Confederate. "Of what division are you?"

"Sheridan's. And you?"

"Early's brigade."

"We met you at Cedar Creek."

"So you did! Shake again!" And once more the two young men gripped hands.

"Now that is what I call very pretty," spoke a Belgian behind his hand to some acquaintances. "One might even call it touching. Enemies—yet friends."

"These Americans are all madmen," said a Mexican, with a hopeless gesture of noncomprehension.

While Lieutenant Glade of the Confederate army stepped aside with Duroc for a word as to the terms of the proposed meeting, the crowd which had been driven to the edge of the Plaza by the soldiery, and scattered down the communicating streets, began to regather.

"The Empress! The Empress!" went up a running cry, over all the open space.

"Make way!" cried the officers commanding the troops in the Plaza. "Open a way for the Empress!"

Carlotta, daughter to the Belgian king, and wife to Maximilian, was moving across the Plaza amidst a throng of civil, military and ecclesiastic dignitaries. As he caught sight of the Empress and realized who she was, Kildare suddenly recalled the words of General Sheridan concerning the message with which he had entrusted him.

"Why, then, was I not to use as much publicity as possible?" grinned the cavalryman. "Well, faith, here is the finest chance for that in the world."

Instantly he stepped toward the procession, his hand fumbling in the breast of his buckskin jacket; but almost at once he was pounced upon by a brace of young Belgian officers of infantry.

"Stand back!" they directed, excitedly.

"Sure, and I will in one moment," said Kildare.

But they refused to listen. "Back! Make way!"

"I carry dispatches from General Sheridan," announced Kildare, as they forced him back. "And I desire to present——"

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HERE a half dozen men of the line leaped to the aid of their officers; together they were dragging Kildare from the Plaza when the quick eye and ear of the Empress came to his aid. Her hand went up, and the procession halted. In a clear voice, she asked:

"Who is this man?"

"An American, Your Majesty."

"What does he want?"

Kildare, in the grip of the infantrymen, heard this.

"To speak with you, Your Majesty," he replied shrewdly, clearly.

The Belgian princess was a woman of great personal beauty; together with this she possessed much force of character. She gestured to the officers who surrounded Kildare.

"Let him come forward," she directed.

Kildare advanced, his broad hat sweeping the ground, his head bent, respectfully. The dispatch which he held out was taken by an official who stood beside the Empress. Carlotta looked at the American closely.

"Of whose command are you, sir?" she asked.

"Of General Sheridan's, Your Majesty."

"Your general is now——"

"At Fort Brown," replied Kildare.

"That is directly across the river from our town of Matamoros," said the Empress, displeasure in her beautiful face. Then, in another tone: "I have been informed that General Sheridan has hostile intentions regarding the Emperor's government."

Kildare saluted.

"I am only a lieutenant of horse, Your Majesty, and am not in the confidence of my general."

"Of what does your leader complain?" demanded the white-bearded official, abruptly.

"I have not heard him complain," replied Kildare.

The Empress smiled quietly.

"You are close of mouth, lieutenant," she said. "But, then, that is what a good soldier should be—close of mouth and ready of hand." And turning to the man at her side she lowered her voice. "The Emperor would be happier if he had some regiments of men like him."

Then she gave a low-spoken command which was repeated along the line; and once more the procession started forward. As it did so, the Empress looked once more at Kildare.

"The Emperor will send for and speak with you," she said; and as he stood bowing, hat in hand, she moved away.

AT THE end of the service, great crowds streamed from the Cathedral; and finally Annetta Prentiss, the girl for whose sake Kildare had struck Rayon, and Señora Marquez, in whose care she was, came through the vast doorway.

"He is handsome," said the good señora; "he is respectful, and I feel sure he is rich."

"But he is a stranger," said the girl. "I do not know him."

"All people are strangers until we meet them," said Señora Marquez.

"I think," said Annetta, "we had better go immediately home."

"Sometimes," declared the elder woman, "I have no patience with you. You are such a child! Every girl should have a husband; and in years of selecting you'd not find a handsomer or more favored one than this young man. And when he writes notes such as I'm sure this one is"—she held out a folded paper—"it's a sign, if another were wanting, that he is in love."

Annetta looked at the note, her eyes full of sudden girlish curiosity; but she did not offer to take it.

"Oh, come, señorita, you are not afraid of it!" Señora Marquez was incredulous.

"He is a stranger," said Annetta. "It is not right that I should read it."

"Oh, hush! Hush, señorita; that is nonsense. I am a better judge of such matters than you."

"But Sister Gertrude said——"

"Please don't tell me any more of the sayings of Sister Gertrude," begged Señora Marquez. "The convent is one place; and the world is another. Besides, Sister Gertrude never had such a note as this in her life. So how could she know anything about it?"

The girl hesitated; there was evidently some sort of logic in the elder woman's remarks that appealed to her. At any rate, there was both curiosity and mischief in the brown eyes as she said:

"If I thought——"

"Read it, and don't bother about thinking," said Señora Marquez. "Such notes

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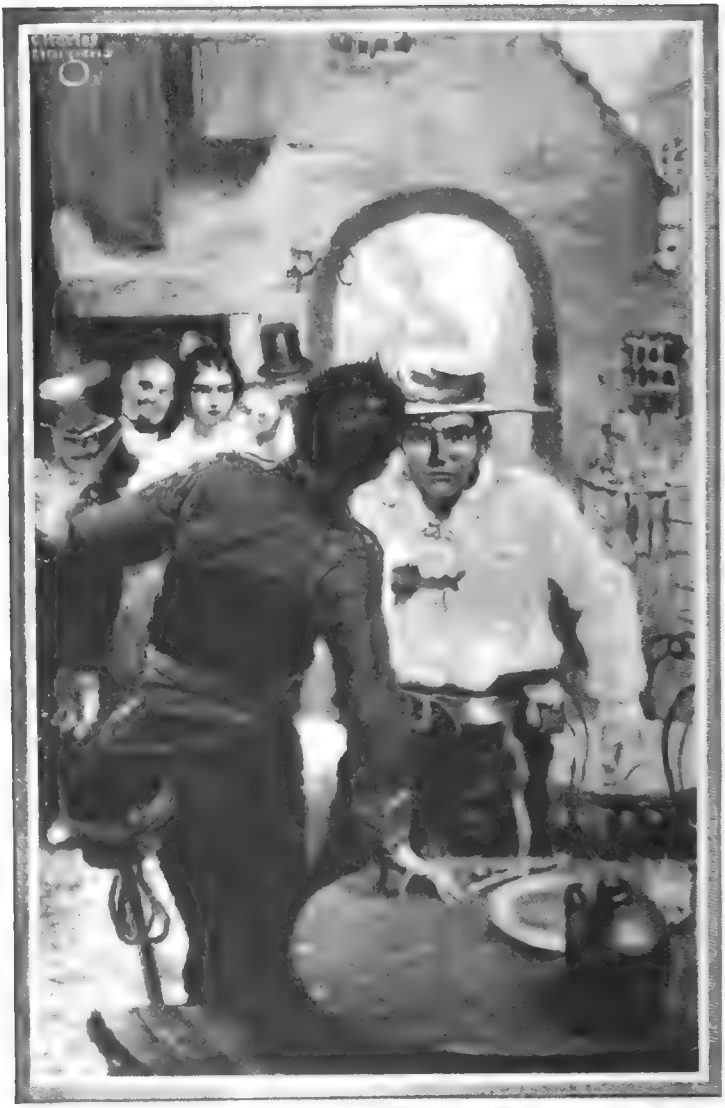

"Cannot a gentleman arrange a little rendezvous, but one of your kind must step in and ruin it?" asked the Mexican. Kildare's arm came around with a snap.

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require no thought. And, another thing, if I had any voice in the government, señorita, I'd have a stop put to rearing girls in convents." And as she spoke she put the missive into Annetta's hands.

As Annetta Prentiss unfolded the note, Señora Marquez caught sight of one of her most intimate gossips emerging from the Cathedral; and so they must step aside and discuss this morsel of romance in its various aspects. Annetta had barely glanced at the writing when she gave a little gasp of dismay and the note fluttered from her fingers.

Now it just chanced that Tom Kildare, passing at some little distance with his new friend, Glade, caught sight of the girl; and in a moment the note was in his hand and he was offering it to her.

"Why, then, señorita," he said, "this can be no sensible bit of writing."

For an instant the girl thought he had caught sight of the contents of the note, and a feeling of shame was within her. But his next words reassured her.

"If it had arrah a grain of sense," said he, "it would never be hurrying so to leave you."

She took the paper.

"I thank you, señor," said she.

"WHEN I saw you last," said Kildare, "it was at the place now so wrongly called Espirito Santo. And afterwards you rode away with honest Pedro Marquez toward the Rio Grande."

"I remember you," she said, and her eyes were bright with swift gratitude. "I had but a glimpse of you, then; but I am sure of your voice. Oh, how glad I am of the chance to thank you!" She remembered how he had looked that night as she saw him before riding away. He was confronting the Mexican, Rayon, and the swaggering European troopers, with smiling ease; and she had noted, too, his ready hand and its nearness to the butt of the heavy revolver. Almost breathless she realized how near to death he had stood at that moment.

And so, with this to begin with, they fell a-talking. And while they were so engaged Simon Prentiss's stick came thumping along on the stones; the old man's ratty eyes were filled with cunning. Señora Marquez saw him first and tried to signal Annetta, but the old man was swiftly at her side, and his quivering grip was on her arm.

"Stop that!" commanded he. The woman, frightened by his manner, stared at him, dumbly. "So this," nodded he, satirically, "is the way you look after my niece, is it?"

"Señor Prentiss," began the woman; but the old man cut her short.

"That young man with whom she is talking is Stahlberg, is it?" he inquired.

"I don't know, señor," tremblingly spoke the Spanish woman. "I have never seen him before to-night."

Old Simon snapped his fingers in contemptuous disbelief.

"Get away home with you," said he. "I see you are not to be trusted."

Señora Marquez, glad of the opportunity, slipped away; and then the old fox approached the spot where Annetta and Kildare were talking.

"Lonely!" Kildare was saying, in Spanish. "Why, a girl like you need never be like that!"

"But I am permitted to have no friends," said Annetta.

"No friends!" The tall officer looked his amazement. "Why, now, who ever heard the like of that! And who is it forbids you friends?"

"My uncle."

"Now, there's an old rascal for you," stated Kildare, still in Spanish and with Simon at his elbow. "I've seen his sort, I think. If I had the handling of your uncle, Señorita Prentiss——"

The old man joggled the elbow gently, and inquired in his most acid voice:

"If you had, sir—what would you do?"

"Uncle!" cried Annetta, frightened.

Kildare turned; and realizing the situation, tried to smother a laugh.

"It's the old curmudgeon himself," was the thought in his mind. "And after one look, I'm ready to believe the worst of him."

"So this is the way you use the privileges I have given you, Annetta!" said old Simon. His sharp old eyes had seen the note crushed in the girl's hand; slyly he snatched at it, and as he did so, his talons hurt her so that the girl cried out.

"Take care!" cried Kildare, a sudden glint in his eyes.

But old Simon snarled at him like a weasel.

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"This, sir," said the old man, "is my niece."

But Kildare looked at him, scornfully.

"EVIDENTLY," said he, "you are one of those who think relationship gives peculiar privileges. Under the same delusion I've known very honest men to beat their wives."

"Sir," said old Simon, coldly, "I desire at this time to have no conversation with you, upon any subject."

Kildare was about to make a reply to this, but he saw the pleading in the girl's eyes; and so, with a bow, he withdrew and proceeded with Glade across the Plaza. Old Simon Prentiss required but one glance to acquaint himself with the contents of the note; and there was wicked mirth in his eyes, and a weazened joy in his heart. Already he was craftily contriving; already the parts of a device were assembling. For never was there a more expert hand in matters of this sort than the old trader. He had a pleasure in bringing down others; he delighted in entangling the young, the strong, the capable; it thrilled him to twist them to purposes of which they had never dreamed.

He had a house on the outskirts of the city—a wide old stone house built by a noble in the days of the Spanish governors, and surrounded by a high wall. When they reached this, the old man stood with Annetta in one of the huge, dark-paneled rooms.

"And this writing, Annetta," he asked, the note in his hand. "Who sent it to you?"

"Uncle," the girl began; but she stopped, afraid of his wicked old eyes.

"I had not expected a thing like this from you," spoke he, coldly, as one old claw tapped the paper. "It seems a thing that will require a deal of explanation." He went closer to her. "So you have been dealing in deceptions, have you, my child! You have a lover, it seems—secretly. You have assignations with him."

Appalled, she shrank back.

"Oh, please!" she said.

"Ah, you do not like that word. But what other am I to use?" he asked, still coldly. "What other?" He read a line or two of Stahlberg's writing. " 'When I last saw you, you were in your uncle's garden. Will you be there once more—to-night? And can I not speak with you—alone?' "

Old Simon looked at her once more. "What other word does this suggest?" questioned he, his thin lips drawing back from his teeth. "What other could I use?"

"I stood inside the garden the other day; the gate was open," said the girl in a low voice. "The man who wrote the note you hold in your hand rode up and stopped to ask his way. He said he was a stranger. I know very little more of him."

But old Simon's face was wreathed in a bitter smile.

"No, no," said he, "I have lived a long time in the world and am not easily fooled." He put the note into his pocket, adding as he did so: "It's a fortunate thing that I learned of this in time; it is fortunate that—" Here he paused and looked at her, fixedly. "But, stop!" he added, in another tone. "Am I quite sure that I *have* learned of it in time?"

The girl's hand went in a fluttering motion to her heart; and her face grew very white. And it was at this moment that Stuart Prentiss came into the room. The light filtering through the high windows fell upon the wan face of his sister; and in an instant he was at her side.

"What is it?" he asked, his eyes going from her to the old man. "What has happened?"

FOR a flash, old Simon hesitated; the appearance of the young man was a thing upon which he had not counted. But his ready craft came to his aid.

"Happened!" spoke he, with a bitter sneer. "What has happened, do you ask? Why, enough, and to spare." Then, shifting his small eyes to the shrinking girl, he added contemptuously: "Convent-bred, too! Pah!"

"Uncle! What do you mean?"

"She is your sister," said the old man, "and you have confidence in her. But when you are as old as I am, nephew, you'll have learned that women, no matter who they are, are not to be trusted." He shook his head. "Secret meetings," said he. "Assignations! They stop at nothing!" The startled eyes of the young man went to Annetta; her head was bent and she sobbed with shame at her uncle's words. "You do well to hang your head," sneered old Simon, taking advantage of this.

"Annetta!" cried her brother. "Why don't you answer him?"

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She now lifted her head and looked at him. The doubt in his face, bewildered and incredulous though it was, was like a blow. She caught her breath; the tears stopped instantly; and she stood cold and proud and silent, looking at them both.

"Do you expect her to deny it?" said the old man. "She cannot. Look at this writing." He held the note out to the brother, who took it with almost trembling hands.

Young Prentiss read the penciled lines, and turned, amazed, to his sister. But the proud young head, crowned with its mass of dark hair, was held still higher. And then she turned quietly and left the room.

"Of course she'll say nothing—of course she'll shield him," said old Simon. "In matters such as this women always do."

"Uncle," said the young man, and there was a shake in his voice, "if she will not answer, you must. Who is this man? Tell me his name."

The leathery face of old Simon for an instant wore a look of dismay. He knew the heady, impulsive nature of the young man, and his swift way of putting thoughts into deeds. Alive, Stahlberg might be of much service; but dead! No!

Again the young man spoke.

"The name!" he said. "I must speak to this man; if there is any truth in what you say, I shall learn it from him!"

But the old man regarded him with an ugly sneer.

"I can very well attend to my own affairs," said he. "And I'll have no hotheads like you meddling with them. If a shame has been put upon our house, Stuart, a mad boy with a revolver in his hand will not wipe it out."

Then old Simon, too, left the room, and Stuart Prentiss stood staring after him, his face white, his hands clenched, fear and doubt in his mind.

THE house which Simon Prentiss occupied on the outskirts had spreading eaves, wide verandas and windows. At one point the roof suddenly lifted into a turret in which hung a bell. All about the house was a beautiful garden, enclosed by the high wall and growing with the gorgeous and graceful plants of central Mexico.

On the following evening, old Simon Prentiss paced one of the garden paths in the dusk, and watched the moon as it lifted above the distant hilltops. Footsteps sounded upon the paved walk; he turned and saw a stout, comfortable man in the habit of a priest.

"Ah! Padre, you are early," said the old man, with his disagreeable chuckle.

"Your message said evening, señor," said the priest mildly. "And the moon is already up."

Old Simon took the padre by the arm, and together they walked up and down the path in the shadow thrown by the house.

"Say the truth, man," chuckled Simon, as he shook one finger playfully. "Say the plain truth! You were surprised, and curious, and that is why you come so soon. Admit it, now, like a good priest."

"It is the truth," acknowledged the stout padre. "I was surprised. And also, Señor Prentiss, I am curious." He paused, holding old Simon by the arm. "Is this proposed marriage of your niece not rather suddenly thought of?"

"Very suddenly," chuckled old Prentiss. "Very suddenly, indeed, padre. As a matter of fact, it was not until last night that it occurred even to me."

Here the chuckle shrilled into a laugh; and the padre's round face grew grave; there was anxiety in his voice as he inquired:

"And who is the bridegroom, señor?"

"The bridegroom, padre?" echoed old Simon. "The bridegroom? Why, you may ask that of the gentleman himself when he arrives."

There was a short pause; and then the priest suggested mildly:

"Señor, I am willing to say that I am a little alarmed at the suddenness of this matter. I have some misgivings. There is a flavor of something irregular about it. Holy Church demands that——"

But with a snarling grimace and a snap of the fingers, the old man interrupted him.

"What affair is it of Holy Church? Am I not the girl's guardian? Is not my sanction the only necessary thing? There are times, padre, when all the forms and conventions of a matter like this cannot be gone through with; a family name may be at stake; some indiscretion may have made formality impossible."

"But," protested the good-natured padre, "with the sweet señorita—with that gentle child, such a thing as you hint cannot be."

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"It *is*, nevertheless," said the old man. The talons upon the padre's arm closed sharply. "Listen to me and never mind your long faces. I will now tell you those things necessary for you to know."

"Yes, señor," said the stout father, his eyes opened wide and his plump hands clasped nervously.

"The young man—the prospective bridegroom, that is—will come here to-night. And he will come secretly. The note I have of his begged her to meet him in the garden."

"The garden!" The priest looked about. "But the wall, señor?"

"YES, yes, I know it is high and hard to climb. But lovers have a way with them, padre. High walls never yet stopped high sentiments. He'll be here, never fear."

"And when he arrives, Señor Prentiss——"

"When he arrives he'll find that there is more to love-making than protestations. Behind every tree, every bush in this garden, padre, there is an armed man. I do not believe in forcing any one's inclinations; nevertheless——"

"You have set a trap, señor."

"I have—a trap to catch a lover. And never was there such a one before. And in the meantime do you remain within call; but be careful to keep yourself out of sight."

Padre Sebastian, dismissed by a wave of the old man's hand, took his way down one of the tree-bordered paths. He was a placid soul, full of kindness, but of no great force; and the thing which he had just heard troubled him. However, he had little time to turn the situation over, for he had scarcely proceeded a dozen yards when he heard light footsteps behind him. Turning, he saw Annetta, like a pale ghost in the moonlight.

"My daughter!" said the good father, startled.

"Oh, Padre Sebastian, is it indeed you!"

"Yes, señorita," said he, and stood looking at her.

The quick eyes of the girl noted a something in his manner.

"Padre," she said, "they have told you?" And as he nodded his head in silence, she added: "But you will not do it, will you; you will not marry me to him?"

"But," said the honest padre, "will it not be for the best, my daughter?"

The girl drew in a deep, shivering breath and her eyes held steadily to his face.

"And do *you*, too, believe what they say of me?" Then, in a sudden burst of despair, she added: "I have not a single friend—not one."

And she wept as she stood there in the moonlight, her dark head against the bole of an ancient tree; and the perplexed padre, looking at her with troubled eyes, did not know what to do or what to say.

Now it chanced that quite close to the wall about Simon Prentiss' house was a level spot, smooth, well ordered, well lighted of a moonlit night or an early morning, and yet screened from public view by some tall trees. The young blades of the European armies greatly favored this as a dueling ground; the rattle of their steel was frequently heard in the silence of the place; and more than once old Prentiss had cursed them for breaking into his sleep of a morning. And this was the spot, suggested by Duroc, and agreed to by Glade, where Vicente Rayon and Tom Kildare were to take their places at a specified distance, revolvers in their hands, and fire at each other according to the code.

And, so it also chanced, as the bells struck the hour of nine, Kildare turned Pepper into the narrow road which led toward the high-walled garden. The moon lifted roundly above the hills, and the open spaces were flooded with silver. But the shadows were heavy beneath the trees and in the hollow places.

"It's a bit late I am," muttered Kildare. "And that's a bad thing in a matter like this when nobody knows you. Divil take them, maybe it's thinking I want to shirk the meeting they are!" Then he smiled at the sudden resentment which this thought aroused in him. "But Glade will be there by this," he assured himself, "and he'll tell them differently."

Pepper stepped cautiously among the shadows cast by the overhanging trees.

"I NEVER saw such a place for lights and shadows, ups and downs, and good and bad, as Mexico," continued the tall trooper as he looked about. "It also seems to be quite a spot for friends and enemies and other contrasts. Last night, in that girl on

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the Plaza, I saw the most beautiful creature in the world; and, in her uncle, I saw the most detestable."

The pony continued on its way; but because of a long curve, Kildare could catch no indications that he was on the right road

"I think I've come the way Glade told me," said he. "But I'm not sure."

Lieutenant Glade, as a second, was bound by all the traditions of that office to accompany his principal to the theater of action. But what was a set of observances to two untrammeled and independent spirits?

"I'll be hard at it all the afternoon," Glade had told Kildare, light-heartedly, in the morning. "So I'll not drop around for you to take you to the fighting ground. You can find the way; it's so plain that a blind man couldn't get lost on it. Nine o'clock's the time; there'll be a moon as big as a bucket, and there's sure to be lots of light. And it'll be quite romantic, too."

Now as he rode up Kildare sighted the lonely figure of Glade pacing in the open space, coldly lighted by the moon.

"Well, bad luck to it," said the Celt, light-heartedly. "It's late I am."

"No matter," said Glade, as Kildare alighted. "Your opponent is later still."

"Faith, then, that's the first decent thing I've seen him do; for if he'd been here before me I'd have had to apologize to him."

The two young men stood in the midst of the open space, the moonlight full upon them; countless stars glittered in the sky, the treetops nodded and waved in the light breeze; the chirping of myriads of insects came from the grass and undergrowth by the wayside. They waited some time in silence; and then Glade said impatiently:

"Confound him! He's going to keep us here all night."

"Faith, I sometimes think blackguards like this fellow do such things to aggravate a body," said Kildare, but altogether unruffled.

But as he spoke these words there came a sudden quieting of the insects all about the place they stood; to men with ears attuned to night in the wilderness, who had known ambuscade and sudden attack, this spoke plainly.

"Take care!" whispered Kildare. Both slipped behind trees, revolvers held ready.

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1923

"That infernal rat, Rayon, never meant to fight fairly!" was the Irishman's thought.

THERE came a red spitting from the brush, and the sharp bark of revolvers. Kildare's gun spoke swiftly; and Glade fired immediately afterward. The firing from the bush increased; Glade cried out and staggered, his hand at his head. Kildare was instantly at his side.

"Your horse!" cried the Celt. The young Confederate was dazed and reeling; but in a moment Kildare had him in the saddle. "I'll hold them."

His hand struck the animal's flank; it bounded away; and the Irishman's gun spoke again, covering the wounded Southerner's retreat. Then, holding to the shadow of the trees, he made his way out of the line of fire; then he sped away along the wall. Rounding a corner his foot struck a projecting stone or root and he sprawled full length. Leaping up, he heard the sound of pursuit close upon him. In the stress of the moment, the one idea in his mind was to place a barrier of some sort between himself and the men who so obviously sought his life; and so, with a spring, he caught the top of the wall. In a moment he was up, had dropped upon the other side and heard the party in pursuit rush, cursing, by.

Tom Kildare, as he leaned against the inner side of the wall, listening to the sounds made by his pursuers as they rushed away on the false scent, reloaded his gun.

"Sure, it's in a hurry they are," said he to himself. "And like most fellows who hurry, they haven't time to think of anything else."

The crashing through the brush and other sounds of pursuit having died away, Kildare shoved the revolver back into its holster and looked about him. The garden showed cool in the moonlight; the trees rustled their tall heads and threw their shadows blackly across the paths; the flowering plants were strange and pale.

"A nice place, faith," said Kildare, approvingly. "Good taste and money both were put into it." He took a step or two forward along the path which ran by the wall and then stopped. "I wonder would there be a dog?" he asked himself. "Sure, I don't want to have the killing of any poor beast, and him attending to his business." He listened for a few moments for any sound

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which might indicate the presence of a watch dog in the garden.

"Hello!" said he, after a moment's pause. "What's that?"

A murmur came through the trees: the sound of voices in low-pitched conversation. Kildare's heart gave a flutter.

" 'Tis old Prentiss' garden, to be sure," murmured he softly. "And 'twould be no strange thing"—a smile came upon his face—"if his niece should be out—looking at the moon."

Softly he made his way through the trees toward the sound; and in a few moments he caught sight of two dim figures in the shadows.

"Well, well," came the voice of old Simon Prentiss, with crabbed petulance, "what is it you have to say, padre?"

"I do not wish to seem too presumptuous," spoke a second voice, "and if I offend you, señor, I ask your pardon——"

"Out with it!" cried old Simon, with added harshness. "You know I have no time for delays to-night. Almost at any moment my guest may arrive."

Kildare saw the figure of the second person, whom he now made out to be a priest, go closer to old Prentiss.

"It was of your niece I wished to speak," said the padre nervously.

"Ah!" said the old flint, and his head was cocked at an angle which showed expectation.

"I have spoken to her; and I have been assured, señor, that there is no occasion for what you have planned," spoke the priest.

"Indeed!" said Simon mockingly.

"THERE has been no communication between her and this man except that of which you know," said the padre. "Not even a spoken word has ever passed between them."

The old man rubbed his hands together and smiled.

"You believe that! I did not take you for quite such a fool. A woman situated as she is will say anything."

"But, señor!" protested the padre.

"Be still!" directed Simon curtly. "When you're needed for your part in this matter, you'll be called. And the night is getting on; you'll not have long to wait."

"But, señor," protested Padre Sebastian desperately, "can you not see——"

Again he was interrupted.

"My eyes are open," spoke the old man. "And I know what has happened. I also know what is necessary to rectify that happening."

The padre made one last appeal.

"In a little while," said he, "it might be too late. Can nothing that might be said move you from this purpose?"

Old Simon's voice was cold and hard as he replied.

"Good father, I have everything prepared for the expected guest. And when he comes I desire to meet him alone."

Silently the padre bowed his head; then he disappeared down one of the shadowy paths, and the old rat watched him go, shaking in a kind of silent laughter.

Kildare regarded him with distaste.

"Bad luck to him," muttered the trooper, "he's like Old Nick himself. I'd rather hear a curse from any other man than a laugh from him. So"—stroking his chin—"he's expecting a guest, is he? Well, judging by the way the old rip put it, that same guest has something to look forward to. However, it's no affair of mine; I'll speak to him, and then be away with me."

Pushing aside some low-hanging bushes, he stepped into the path. The moonlight was full upon his face, and old Simon looked at him.

"So, sir," said the old man at last, in Spanish, "I see you again, do I?"

"If your eyes are reasonably good, I think you do," replied Kildare dryly and in the same tongue. "But it will only be for a moment, though, and then I'll be going. I've just stepped out to tell you how I came to be in your garden, and——"

But old Simon held up one hand, pallid and thin, in the moonlight.

"Is there any need of that?" asked he. "I think I am fairly well acquainted with the facts."

"Good," said Kildare, with a feeling of relief. "It's all right, then. Since you know how and why I am here, there's no use wasting any more words upon the matter. So good night to you, sir."

"Wait!" The thin old hand was upon the trooper's arm as he turned away. "Yesterday I saw you for the first time and we had very little chance to become acquainted. Had we better not improve this opportunity?"

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Kildare took off his hat. "Oh!" she said. There was a little silence and then: "Why are you here? My uncle will be angry."

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Kildare looked into the leathery, lined old face appraisingly.

"Why, then," said he, "you are the last person in the world I would have taken for a social character."

Simon Prentiss laughed.

"You never can tell," declared he satirically. "Circumstances alter cases. I usually do not speak the acquaintance of most people. But you, sir, are different." He looked all about with the furtive cunning of a gray old rat, and then went on. "It's a pleasant night; the air is cool and the moon is high. So, with all these things in our favor, we can confer at our ease, and settle the future to our mutual advantage."

Kildare hooked his thumbs into his belt and looked amused.

"The future, Mr. Prentiss," said he, "will have very little in common for you and me."

The old man gestured dissent.

"YOU are young," said he. "And there are some things which the young do not see clearly. One can seldom tell just how the lines of one's life will fall. Your future and mine may run together in many important ways."

"Well," said the trooper, "if you get any pleasure from the notion, I will never deprive you of it. And so, as you know why I came here to-night, and that I had little control of——"

But Simon stopped him.

"It is a lack of control which always places young men in the situation in which you find yourself," spoke he, shaking one forefinger admonishingly. "And the result has always been the same. They very comfortably see no way to set the matter right. They quite cheerfully avoid any consequences, preferring to see the weight fall upon the shoulders of another. But, sir, others are not always willing to bear the burden."

"I think," said Kildare, looking at him narrowly, "I notice a definite something in the back of what you say."

"Good! Your perception is sharpening." The old man pointed along the garden path toward the house. "Will you walk with me a piece?"

It was in Kildare's mind—indeed, it was in his mouth—to refuse; but as his eyes followed the pointing finger, he saw a moonlit window and caught the outlines of a graceful form. Like a flash it occurred to him who this might be and his answer to the old man's question was ready enough.

"To be sure, sir. 'Tis at your side I am."

Old Simon went down the path, his cane tapping upon the stones. As they passed a vine-covered summer house, Kildare's keen eyes detected a movement among the shadows, and then the cold glint of steel. Instantly his thoughts went to those who had attacked him outside the garden, and his revolver leaped from its holster.

"You infernal old rat!" he grated. "Hold them off, or you'll be the first to go!"

The narrow eyes of the old man shifted from the speaker to the forms lurking in the shadow. And he chuckled.

"Put up your weapon," said he. "There is no danger from these men—now." Kildare caught the stress upon the last word.

"*Now?*" he asked. "What am I to understand by that?"

"They are here to see to it that there is no hesitancy on your part, sir. I have a weakness—perhaps it is a mark of age—for things turning out as I plan them. But"—he gestured—"don't let us waste any time. For, unless I'm much mistaken, you two have a deal to talk of."

They went forward and finally on the edge of a cleared space, white with moonlight, Simon Prentiss halted.

"It will be as well, no doubt, if I left you here," chuckled he. "For what is age but an intruder at such a time?" His hands touched the cavalryman's arm. "Ah, what a night! What a night! The moon is high in the sky; the garden is all a-murmur; the perfume of the flowers is heavy in the air. What a night, young sir! What a night, indeed!"

And then he went shuffling away into the shadows and Tom Kildare was left alone on the edge of the moonlight, his face upturned toward the girl who stood, so like a beautiful spirit, in the window.

THE silvery, unsubstantial quality of the moonlight as it touched the stones of the wall and the broad casement gave the picture at which Kildare gazed a spirituality which tempered his feelings with awe.

"She is like a young saint," he told himself reverently; "a young saint, with the

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eyes of heaven looking down upon her. And there is sorrow in her face; if I were close enough to make sure, I'd swear, too, there are tears in her eyes."

Anger leaped up in the heart of the trooper; that anyone could find it in himself to do anything to bring sorrow or tears to such as she, stamped him, in his mind, as a savage. He took a step out into the cleared space and spoke softly.

"Hist! Do you hear me!"

Startled, the girl looked down; she saw the form in the pale light, but it was not at all clear to her.

"Who is there?" she asked, and Kildare thought he heard a tremble in her voice.

He took off his hat so that the moon might answer for him; and even at that distance he caught the sharp intaking of her breath as she recognized him.

"Oh!" she said. There was a little silence and then with one hand holding to the casement she leaned outward. "Is it you? Why are you here? My uncle will be angry."

Kildare, as he stood, his broad-rimmed hat in his hand, the moonlight shining in his upturned face, smilingly considered these things.

"Yes," said he softly. "It's me, avic! And I am here by chance only—a chance, too, that I was grumbling about a little while ago, God forgive me! For, you see, we seldom know what's good for us. As for your uncle being angry, dear lady, don't worry about that. I spoke to him a while ago; and he minded my being here no more than he minded the air about him."

Again there was a little silence; and Kildare had a vague feeling of trouble.

"You talked with my uncle?" she said at last, in a hushed sort of way.

"I did; for ten minutes or more. And 'twas he who brought me here, under your window. He left me but a moment ago."

"He brought you here?" The trouble which had been but an impression before, now came to him definitely in her voice. "Why did he do that?"

"Faith, then, I don't know," answered Kildare. "But what matter? Sure, there you are, and here I am, and above is the moon very kindly showing us to each other."

The dark-crowned head bent still lower, and her eyes were fixed upon his face.

"I am afraid," she said. "And when I looked down and saw you a moment ago, I thought you were—someone else."

"Someone else!" Kildare echoed the words. "There was to be someone else, then?" To himself he muttered: "A man! I can tell by the way she said it. A woman always speaks of a man in a tone that can't be mistaken. May the divil set sail to him!"—in sudden exasperation. "Who is he, at all?"

Annetta stood with her white hands clasped at her breast.

"Yes," she said, in answer to his question. "My uncle expected someone. And that is why I am afraid."

At this, a dullness seemed to leave Kildare's mind; it was as if he had turned a fresh page in a book; as if he had come suddenly upon a newer and keener matter. The uncle had expected someone. He had said so. So Kildare called to the girl.

"Whisht! Do you hear me?" And as she bent down, he said craftily: "The man your uncle expected is an old friend, I suppose."

But she shook her head.

"No," she said. "They did not know each other. My uncle has never even seen him."

IT WAS so, then! The old weasel had mistaken him for another man! Kildare spoke to the girl; she could not hear him now, for a changed slant of wind was blowing his words away. And he could not lift his voice, for what he had to say was not for the ears of anyone who might be lurking in the darkness. The window was not more than a dozen feet from the ground; this was no great height for an active man, especially when a tough-stemmed climbing vine made the way easy. So in a moment or two he was sitting on the window-sill, and smiling at her reassuringly.

"Don't be frightened, Annetta," said he; "it's only a little stratagem. Awhile ago I saw a dozen or more blackguards with guns in their fists, hiding among the trees. And some of them may be close at hand."

That there were armed men in the garden caused Annetta to thrill with fear; but as she looked at the gay adventurer who sat so at his ease upon the window-sill, her mind grew more at ease. Kildare smiled and clasped both hands about one knee, comfortably.

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"Faith, we never know what's in store for us," he told her, cheerfully. "I set out tonight to prove to a greaser that I am a better man than he; and never a sight do I see of him. But, here I sit, high up in a window, talking to yourself, and feeling as proud as Punch about it all."

He told her how he had been attacked; how he had scaled the wall to escape his pursuers, and also how he had met her uncle.

"You said he seemed pleased to see you?" she asked,and he caught anxiety in her voice.

"He did; and after him giving me the divil's own set of hard looks only yesterday. But I think I see how it is. He's made a curious little mistake—he thinks I am the person he's been expecting."

As he said this the keen eyes of the cavalryman were fixed upon her searchingly. He saw the look of fear; then the white hands went up, covering her face; she leaned her dark head against the casement, and sobs shook her from head to foot.

He sat regarding her quietly; the feeling uppermost in him was a desire to draw the concealing hands away, to take her in his arms, and to whisper to her not to fear—that he was there—that he would protect her against everything and everyone. But he did not; there were stern things ahead, his practised mind told him; and it would be much better for them both if he found out what they were.

"Don't cry, agra," said he. "Here am I, a friend to you, now that your brother is not within call. Tell me: who is this expected man who makes you afraid? And why do you fear him?"

SHE dried the tears from her cheeks and turned to him. Now Tom Kildare was a man who would stand looking at by anyone—and more especially by a woman. His stalwart, free-moving body, his clear eyes, his ready smile, always brought him forward into a woman's good-will. And so it was not strange that this harassed, inexperienced girl should confide in him.

"Oh!" she said. "I am in great distress; I don't know how to act or what to do."

And then, with many haltings and embarrassments, she told her story.

"I see," said he, gravely, when she had done. "Your uncle believes, or affects to believe, that certain things are facts, and, when this unknown arrives, will have him marry you whether or no you or he are willing."

Again the girl burst into sobs and again the white hands hid her face.

"This is no nice thing for a girl to have happen to her," went on the trooper, slowly. "And, agra, I can understand your tears." There was a pause in which there was no sound save the noises of the night; and then he went on, a sadness in his voice, which was no common thing with him. "Sure, there *is* luck in the world, no matter what wise people say against it. And there's a bad and good luck, too; for what else was it but good luck that first led me to where you were? But bad luck must step in," he went on, "for when I lose sight of you, someone else appears and gains a place which maybe would have been mine if I'd been more fortunate."

And now as she looked at him, there was a light of girlish mischief in her eyes.

"But," she said, "you and I are quite friendly. Would you have it otherwise? Would you prefer to stand in the other man's place and have me afraid of you?"

His swift glance met hers; and at once he swung himself around, and was in the room.

"Why," said he, "that's true! I've been looking at the matter with only one eye. Faith, now!" There was a ring in his voice. "A man who's had my experience of to-night—running from his enemies and finishing here—should never question his luck. That's black ingratitude, so it is."

His swift action and the confidence of his manner caused her to draw back a trifle. But the roguery remained in her eyes, and the smile came back to her lips.

"It is the third time we've met," she said. "And there are people who think there is good fortune in odd numbers."

"I am one of them," said Kildare, promptly. "And more especially, avic, do I believe in the number three." With a quick movement he caught her hand and held it between both his own. "Three times have I spoken with you," he said in a lowered tone, "and each time I've loved you more and more. Why stay here at the mercy of this old curmudgeon who is so ready to think such things as this of you?" He took the other hand and drew her close to him. "If what I read in your eyes is true, I'm more than a stranger to you," he whispered. "Am I right? If I am, waste

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no more time over it, for here I am ready to take you away; and as Tom Kildare's wife your uncle's talk will mean no more to you than the chattering of a jay."

She looked at him steadily; her eyes were very serious now; and she said:

"You say you love me. Are you sure?"

"Dear child, I am. I'm not a boy who does not know his mind, but a man who has seen and understands life. I love you, and I will always love you."

They stood looking at each other, when there came a flare of light in the room and they saw old Simon Prentiss nodding and grinning at them.

"Very good," said he, "very excellent, indeed. I had not expected so much progress. But leave a young spark to himself, as the old saying runs, and he'll soon burst into flame!"

KILDARE took a step toward the old flint, and hooking his thumbs in his belt, stood surveying him coolly.

"I suppose, sir," said the soldier, "it's well planted in your mind that you are a clever, deserving sort of man. Am I right?"

Simon Prentiss continued to grin and nod.

"I have my parts, sir," he returned. "I have my parts, and am not one given to false modesty."

Kildare laughed.

"Well," said he, "I hope it will not be too serious a shock to you when I tell you that you have made a most serious——" But here the cavalryman paused. It had been in his mind to show the old schemer the mistake he had made; but something interposed in his mind. He stood looking at the other, a peculiar expression creeping into his face—a laughing shrewdness showing itself in his eyes. Then he went on in an altered tone. "I think you had some idea in your head, Mr. Prentiss, regarding your niece and myself."

"I had," said the old man. "And I still have, sir. I fancied it within the bounds of possibility that you might marry her."

"You are willing?"

"Sir," said the ancient rogue, "I am anxious."

Kildare turned to Annetta eagerly.

"And you?" With his back to the old man he whispered: "Say yes, agra! Say yes, and we'll play him a trick such as has never been played him before."

She put both hands in his; he kissed her upon her lips; and as they stood so, old Simon threw open a door; then to the sudden dismay of Kildare, who expected the entrance of the honest Padre Sebastian alone, there came a sudden crowding of people into the room.

"My friends," said old Simon, glee in his voice, "allow me to present my nephew, Herr Stahlberg!"

There were men and women both among the newcomers; and among the foremost was Duroc.

"What!" cried the Frenchman, astonished. "That is not Stahlberg!"

"Not Stahlberg!" The old man turned upon Kildare.

"Old gentleman," said Kildare, laughing, now that the shock of surprise was gone from him, "if you had been frank with me, I'd told you that long since. But 'tis not finding fault with you I'd be doing, for you've forced much happiness upon me. And Tom Kildare thanks you."

"You thank me!" Old Simon Prentiss now looked white and bitter, indeed. "Wait, sir! Wait! I'll give you something to thank me for!" At the window, his voice sounded in the night. "This way, all of you. Your man is here!"

There came a rush of feet in the garden; a door was thrown open; loud sounds came from the stairs.

"Tom!" The girl cried out his name, thrilling with this first sound of it. "Don't wait! In a moment they will be here. Go! I shall be safe!"

"You are sure? Remember"—and his eyes looked into hers—"you are to belong to no one, now, but me."

"To no one," she said, "but you."

Again he kissed her upon the lips; and then he sprang to the window, his Colt gun in his hand, as a half score armed men entered the room.

"You have given her to me," he said to old Simon. "So mind you keep her safe. In a little while I shall return for her."

The enraged old trader shrieked an order to his men; shots shattered the glass of the window; Annetta screamed. But Tom Kildare had gone.

The working out of Rayon's ambitions has still to reach its culmination. Can Kildare hold his own? See January EVERYBODY'S, out December 15th.

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A New Craig Kennedy Detective Story

The Hawk

Craig Kennedy Goes Duck-Hunting and Brings Down Alien Game to the Long Island Sands

By Arthur B. Reeve

Illustration by Harold Anderson

"ASTA HARLEY came running down the stairs, screaming at the top of her voice: 'The Doctor! The Doctor! Quick!' . . . And, Kennedy, when we got there, we found Dr. Sanford—you know him—dead, in the trophy room, here at the Lodge!"

"Dr. Sanford—yes. . . . Who is this Asta Harley?"

"Never mind, now. Come over to the Lodge, Kennedy—and hurry! I don't trust any one over here—now!"

At the mention of Dr. Sanford's name, I knew that the call must be about the surgeon who had gained great prominence recently as a rejuvenator of old age, a surgeon with a practise now that no two doctors could handle. He had taken as his assistant a brilliant medical student who had just spent two years in postgraduate work with Steinach and Voronoff in Vienna and Paris, Dr. Wallace Griffith.

Craig hung up, frowned as he looked out of the window into the blackness. It was almost midnight and raining torrents. In the doorway of the old Peconic farmhouse stood Waldo Penny, mouth open with country curiosity.

"It's a good thing you told me that was John Carter, Cap'n," smiled Craig. "He was as crazy as one of those coots we didn't get to-day."

"Yes, yes. He was excited, Mr. Kennedy. Yes, yes. Are you goin'?"

A moment before we had been stretching our legs wearily before the grateful blazing logs, too tired to take off the flannels that burdened our sensitive backs. Up at four, before daylight, and out all day until dark in the blinds over on the Point with only a brace of blacks and a stray broadbill to show for it, we had been consoling ourselves with the knowledge that we were getting health and relaxation even if the ducks were not flying.

"Crimes seem to follow you," I grumbled. Then, catching Waldo's eye: "Are you going?" I repeated.

"Get back into your boots, Walter. Put a slicker over your hunting togs. Carter is too big a man to lose his head without a mighty serious reason. Yes, I'm going. Waldo will take us over in the flivver."

Kennedy and I had gone out to Peconic and Shinnecock for our yearly duck-hunting vacation and put up at Penny's quaint old farmhouse. Waldo had answered the telephone and told us that it was the banker, John Carter, calling from the Hunting Lodge on Hampton Beach, a private hunting club on a secluded spit of sand between ocean and bay, connected by a narrow neck to the shore. It was, according to local report, a favorite spot of rum runners in the off season.

As we turned into the Lodge grounds, the big pillars, like white sentinels in the darkness and the rain, seemed to challenge

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us. Their lights illuminated the winding drive over the sand dunes, but could not penetrate far in the murk. We had to crawl along the crushed shell road to the Lodge.

The rear wheel sank into the sand up to the hub. I jumped out, holding my hat with both hands and peered up the drive. My slicker snapped in the wind like a broken sail. A few yards ahead was the Lodge. It was a rumbling structure of concrete, pebble-dashed, not high, but spread out over a lot of ground. Lights glowed in all the windows and the rays died off in the darkness like a half-hearted invitation to warmth and cheer, an apology to compensate weakly for the crime that had called us out on such a night. All about the Lodge was a porch at least twenty feet wide.

"Waldo," said Kennedy, "cover that hood to keep the water out of the motor. We'll leave the car where it is."

We walked quickly, breasting the gale, toward the porch and had almost reached it when Craig put his hand on my arm.

Out of the darkness came a girl's voice.

"A fine lover! Every thought a thought of distrust, suspicion! I came out here to meet you, to tell you something. . . . What it was you can find out for yourself, now! I'll not be talked to like a child by you!"

"Wait—Asta—please!" There was real alarm in the tones of the man's voice.

A bitter laugh, but musical, was the answer. Then a scurrying of feet as the girl retreated to a window, low, down to the porch level. She was young, enveloped in a poncho, head covered. As she entered she looked about hurriedly, and there was fear in her eyes.

"Just a minute, Walter," cautioned Craig above the whistle of wind. "See what happens."

I stood. It wasn't much. Just a man walking excitedly to a door at the other end, where he let himself in with a latch key. Then silence except for the wind and the booming surf, a sinister silence. Kennedy shrugged. There was no time for further thought. He found a bell which we could hear echoing loudly in the Lodge.

A MOMENT later we were alone with old John Carter. I say old, because a man who had been in his prime in the great trust-building days at the beginning of this century was certainly no longer young. Yet he looked younger even than he had then, clear-eyed, tall, iron-gray of hair, distinguished in feature and bearing.

Carter led us to the trophy room of the Hampton Hunting Lodge. There, surrounded by paintings and prints of the chase, silver cups, stuffed mallards, blacks, redheads, Canada geese, we found Dr. Sanford, still in his chair before a table, dead.

Kennedy made a hasty examination. What I noted most was his blue, cyanosed, gaspy look. Before him was what had once been a highball. I looked about. The trophy room must have been a quiet room, the quietest in the Lodge, with the big writing table, a few books, a wide divan before a driftwood fire in the huge fireplace.

"How was he discovered?" asked Craig. "Who found him?"

"Well," returned Carter, "you see, it was here that Asta Harley kept her little portable typewriter. She had come up here to transcribe some notes of conversations and agreements. . . . She opened the door. There was the doctor sprawled back in the big chair before the table—dead. On the table before him, as if just written, ready to be sealed and mailed, was a letter . . . a scurrilous letter, about Asta Harley herself."

"What do you mean, transcribe notes? I thought this was a place of recreation—not business."

Carter cleared his throat. "Well, it happens that some of us were talking business this time. Armand Cadman is here—he and some associates are promoting the Caucasian clay concession and want to interest me and some banking friends. In Georgia, in the Caucasus, there are mineral springs that yield a peculiar clay. You know how famous the Georgian girls are for their beauty?"

"Yes." Kennedy had walked over to the little typewriter on a stand near the fireplace. In it were some half-typed notes. He bent over and so did I. "What do you think of this, Walter?"

"Think of it? In what way?"

"The peculiar color of the typing—faded."

"H'm. It looks like typing that has aged."

He struck the keys. "Now is the time

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for all good men to come to the aid of the party."

"Look," he muttered, as he pulled the sheet out of the machine. "The ribbon has faded, too!" He turned to Carter. "Who else is here?"

"The Princess Anastasia Barytinsky—Princess Stasie, you know."

Carter paused. I did know something about her. The Princess Anastasia had formerly been an Italian show girl in New York named Serpico. Her voice had shown promise and somehow she had managed to go abroad to cultivate it. She had married Prince Shamyl Barytinsky in Monte Carlo and, not long ago, had divorced him in Paris.

"You know," resumed Carter as I nodded recollection, "the prince turned out to be something of a roué. But he had influential friends who admired the Princess Stasie. That was how she got the Caucasian clay concession. Among others she consulted Monsieur Cadman—who is, as you know, an international lawyer—and he suggested getting American capital. So they came to New York. I have known the princess for some time."

It was then that I remembered having heard vague rumors connecting the name of the princess with Carter. There had even been reports of his engagement to the singer.

"They brought Asta Harley along with them as secretary," Carter added. "The real proposal was to organize what we have decided to call 'Love, Incorporated.' "

Kennedy looked up quickly but Carter continued seriously, "To join rejuvenation by gland extracts and all that sort of thing with the actual rejuvenation of faces." I watched Craig's face keenly as he spoke but Craig did not move a muscle. "It was a matter of financing. Then, too, they knew that it was only my influence that could bring a man like Dr. Sanford into such a scheme." Carter glanced uneasily at the dead man in the chair. "Suppose we go down to the gun room and talk," he suggested.

Kennedy dropped back a moment on the way down, and whispered to Waldo Penny. Penny took his sou'wester and his slicker and disappeared.

"What do you think of it?" inquired Carter anxiously.

Kennedy looked about the room at the guns in the racks. "Well, Sanford wasn't shot, anyhow." He paused. "He was poisoned."

"The drink?" asked Carter quickly.

Kennedy shook his head. "No; and not the food. It wasn't in the cigar or cigarette, either. And there wasn't a mark on him like a needle, so far as I could discover."

"Then—how?"

"A gas!" Kennedy paused again, decided to do the questioning himself. "You said he was discovered dead by Asta Harley, that before him was an unfinished, scurrilous letter, about her. Where's the letter?"

"Here." Carter drew it from his pocket.

Craig took the letter, apparently freshly typed in black.

It was addressed to Dr. Wallace Griffith, and warned him against Asta. She was, it said, not interested in him, but was bent upon leading John Carter on to marry her. How, he was asked, did he account for Asta's mysterious disappearances, when, for weeks at a time, she would be away, only to return with plenty of money?

CARTER told Craig what he knew of the other letters. He had had one, warning him against Anastasia—saying she had been a denizen of the old Haymarket in New York, and had submitted to rejuvenation only to lure him into marrying her.

"I see," said Kennedy. "You ignored this?"

"Of course," said Carter, stiffly. But I saw the lingering doubt in his eyes.

"I want to see Asta Harley," said Craig. Then, "Will you send for her, Mr. Carter?"

He did so, and, in a few minutes, she came. She was a lovely creature, gowned in white lace—as different from the fierce, poncho-covered girl we had seen in the storm outside as it was possible to imagine. Quietly she entered the room and crossed to Carter's side.

"You sent for me?" she asked.

"Yes, Asta, I did, and I'm sorry to have had to do so. I sent for Mr. Kennedy, who happened to be staying at a farmhouse over on the shore. I thought he might help us."

The girl looked at us quizzically and a smile flitted over her face as she murmured: "Mr. Kennedy. Are you one of

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those . . . detectives who ask everybody questions the hour after the murder . . . and then give the real murderer a chance to escape?"

Craig smiled good-humoredly. I would have answered her with asperity. Carter turned her remark adroitly.

"Yes, Asta, you are to be questioned. You guessed correctly. But all we want to know is what you saw."

She smiled back a smile that wafted the banker on a cloud of delight.

"Miss Harley," said Kennedy, "I want to find out what you can tell us. Would you mind going over all you have been doing since—well, say from half an hour before you found out about the murder to the moment when Mr. Carter's message reached you just now?"

She looked startled and, I thought, angry. She stared hard at Craig, then turned to Carter.

"Why should I account for my time to this man?" she asked. "No—I will not."

Before Carter could speak, Craig asked, "Why?" in a tone of simple wonder, but at once smiled. "Very well—tell us just what you saw, then."

Asta breathed more easily. Raising her big eyes frankly to his, she told her apparently truthful story. "I had some typing to finish," she said, "and I had gone to the trophy room where I keep my typewriter. I saw the doctor sitting with his back to me, it seemed, in the chair. When I spoke to him, he didn't answer. I went over to him. I screamed when I found he was dead. I never stopped to look for anything or anybody, but ran, ran as quickly as I could from the room. There . . . that's just what I saw, and as I saw it—all."

"But suppose you tell me what you know?"

"Know? I don't know anything about it."

"But," insisted Craig, "tell me what the young lady was going to tell the young man out in the rain, on the porch!"

"Asta! Don't answer anything. You don't have to do it!" The interruption came from a young and handsome man about twenty-eight who had just entered the gun room.

Asta looked more amused than angry. She turned to young Dr. Griffith sarcastically. "I can take care of myself. You needn't worry." She turned her back on him and appealed to John Carter with her eyes.

Griffith remained standing, arms folded tensely as if holding himself in leash.

"Carter, might I see those other letters?" asked Craig.

"Surely," said Carter. "I asked Cadman and the princess to wait in the grill. We might go to them there——"

In the grill the princess's extremely daring gown and the garish lighting were incongruous. But what at once struck me was the obvious fact that she and the French lawyer had been quarreling. She turned toward Carter, her eyes full of appeal—but he was looking at Asta, who had taken her place by Griffith, across the room.

Neither Cadman nor the princess hesitated to show us the letters they had received. I was struck at once by their identity with the ones we had already seen—and by the fact that, like Asta's, the typing was of a clear black, not at all faded. Cadman was warned against the princess—she, against him. It was a vicious circle.

"I'd like to keep these," said Kennedy, "if I may?"

There was no objection. And now, as we all waited, there came a clamorous pealing of the bell at the door. The coroner and the undertaker had come. While they were seeing the body all the guests and servants were assembled in the grill. I took the opportunity to draw Kennedy out into the hall. We could hear the coroner and the undertaker down the hall. "All right, Sidney, I give you permission to remove the body. You'd better do it the first thing in the morning."

I felt Kennedy's hand on my arm. We slipped behind the portières into the grill and stood there, apparently watching the others, but really listening. I looked inquiringly at Craig.

"I caught a glimpse of the princess watching the trophy room down the hall. They ought to meet about here. . . . Sh!"

"DOCTOR!" Evidently the princess had buttonholed the coroner and drawn him aside near the doorway where we were standing. "There's something I want to tell you, privately, in confidence."

"Yes?" He was evidently impressed.

"When Asta Harley was coming out of

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her faint, I heard her say, 'Why isn't the doctor here?' I asked her, 'Who?' She had a moment to think, then, 'Dr. Sanford,' she said. Then we carried her to her room. Fifteen minutes later—even sooner—she was out in the storm with a poncho over her. I think she went up on the roof, that this young Dr. Griffith saw her coming down. Now, where had *he* been? . . ."

We could not catch any more. Her hand was on the portière and we had to move away. She was trying, plainly, to involve Griffith—as well as Asta. And I was prepared to believe Griffith knew a good deal.

My speculations were interrupted when the coroner began, rather informally, to ask questions. "I believe you discovered the body of the deceased, Miss Harley? May I ask, was it usual for you to use your typewriter so near midnight?"

"Not usual—no. But I did want to use it, to-night."

"Where was Dr. Griffith in the evening?"

"I don't know."

He turned to Griffith and repeated the question.

With a sullen, half-defiant air the young doctor answered. "Over at Hampton, to see Conklin, the druggist, who happens to be a friend of mine. I didn't get back until at least half an hour after this thing was discovered."

"Did you see Miss Harley at any time during the night?"

"Yes, before I left, and just now with Mr. Kennedy."

"At any other time?"

I fancied I caught a telltale flush on Asta's face.

"I cannot recall."

"Miss Harley, do you know why the doctor was out?"

"I do not."

"Did it give you any concern?"

Asta answered wearily. "I didn't care!"

"What did you want to see Conklin about, Doctor, on a night like this?"

"It has nothing to do with this—this murder. I refuse to answer."

The coroner hammered at Dr. Griffith awhile. He would admit nothing, but the impression conveyed was that he had, in spite of his denials, seen Asta in the storm, getting down from the roof.

IT WAS so late when the coroner had gone that Kennedy decided to stay at the Lodge. Carter provided us with two large rooms and a bath and a smaller room, adjoining, for Waldo. Kennedy telephoned a telegram to the local office in the town, and we then went to our rooms.

"What gas was it that killed him?" I asked Craig when we were alone. "Have you any idea?"

"Our old enemy in the war—chlorine."

"What makes you think so?"

"His appearance, the symptoms, the circumstances."

He had laid down on a little table the sheet of paper he had taken from the typewriter.

"You saw the faded, aged appearance of the typewriting on this sheet in the machine? Well, chlorine is a splendid bleaching agent. Look at this line I wrote. Even the typewriter ribbon was bleached a little by it. Perhaps you didn't notice. But there were other things in that room whose color looked a bit faded."

"But," I interposed, "why didn't Asta get it, too?"

"She must have come in after the gas was gone. You know how the wind was blowing. There probably was a sudden cloud of the gas, heavy, overwhelming, lingering long enough to kill. Then it must have been dissipated, carried outdoors."

"Yes—and the draft up the wide flue of that chimney."

Kennedy merely smiled and shook his head. "Now, let's look at the letters."

For a moment he studied them.

"All written on the same fine linen paper with the same water mark."

He began to examine the typewriting through a little ruled glass strip which he always carried in a case in his pocket, a device by which one could measure the "finger-prints" of a typewriter. He glanced up from his study and measurements. "All written on the same machine, including the letter found before Sanford on the table."

"What machine?" I asked.

"That portable machine in the trophy room—Asta's!"

We were interrupted by the entrance of Waldo, dripping and half frozen. But his face wore a quiet smile. Waldo felt that he was a detective.

With a great show of caution he drew

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She moved. Her lips tried to frame a word: "The grip—grip!" Then she slipped away into faintness again.

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from under his coat a can and exhibited it proudly. I gasped, literally. It was an empty container for chloroform. Craig smiled with thoughtful satisfaction.

"I found it in the gutter of the lower roof. The roof slopes. Way up on top it is flat, a sort of roof garden, with steps. After I had hunted around and around the Lodge, I saw water coming over the roof gutter at one place as if it was stopped up. I climbed a pillar. The can must have rolled there and lodged in the gutter."

"Just what I thought," remarked Kennedy, turning over the can. "Something was dropped down that wide flue, on the fire."

"But wouldn't Sanford have noticed it?" I objected. "Why didn't he get out?"

Kennedy shook his head. "I thought first of cyanogen. Maybe some might have been formed, somehow. I can't say. But the point is that some one on that flat roof poured a can of chloroform down the chimney on the fire—slowly—so that it would not put the fire out. It was ticklish. Too much of it would smother the fire—and the fire was necessary. Perhaps the chloroform answers your question. I can't say, offhand."

"Wouldn't it explode?"

"The vapor might, if it were contained and mixed with the right proportion of air. But as a liquid, free, the attacker had rather to be careful not to put out the fire. Chloroform, in that way, would be suddenly decomposed by the heat into chlorine gas and hydrochloric acid. I noticed on his cuff a spot that must have been iodide of potassium. One part was turned brown. But where it had been on the starch it was blue. It gave me a hint. Oh, it could have been only chlorine and hydrochloric acid, when we consider all the circumstances. Besides, here is the container!"

I looked toward the letters. "Who wrote them?" I was endeavoring to form a hypothesis. "Dr. Sanford, himself? He was the father confessor of the sex sins of society."

KENNEDY shook his head again sententiously. "You saw that letter about Asta Harley?" I nodded. "A perfect, unfaded black in the typewriting." I nodded again. "And the sheet of notes in the machine?"

"Yes. Faded, aged."

"Is it possible that the letter was placed there *after* the fumes had cleared?" queried Craig. "It is not only possible; it must have been so!"

"Then who put it there? Asta?"

"About herself?" he returned. "Poison-pen writers have been known to do that. I incline to believe that whoever killed Sanford placed that letter there for a purpose."

Seeking a motive, I thought of the victims of the letters. But all had been victims—Princess Stasie, Asta Harley, Armand Cadman, John Carter, and Dr. Griffith. "Any one in this Love, Incorporated, scheme might have done it," I exclaimed.

"Yes, but who did?" Craig smiled quietly.

"Well, why were the letters written?" I asked. "Usually there's some pathological reason for such letters, isn't there?"

Craig nodded. "Not in this case, I think. There was a purpose."

Waldo had been following, open-mouthed. Now he broke in with his Montauk twang. "Blacks, coots, broadbill, mallards, geese, high-fliers, all of them, I know. But these people, these women—no." He cast about with his native Montauk common sense. "Mr. Kennedy, some one in this case is—is a hawk!"

I had always had admiration for Waldo's native qualities. I thought it a good expression—"the Hawk." "Yes," I exclaimed. "But who is the Hawk?" I turned suddenly to Kennedy. "Where do you suppose this Prince Shamyl is?"

Kennedy merely shrugged. He was getting ready to turn in. "I can tell more if I get an answer to my telegram in the morning."

Every one was late the next morning. Breakfast might as well have been luncheon. As Asta entered the breakfast room with John Carter, I saw that a change had taken place overnight. It seemed as if distrust and suspicion were brewed in the percolator on the serving-table. Each was deeply engrossed in the other. The disparity in age was apparent, yet I could not help thinking what a handsome couple they made. Griffith was with the princess at one side.

Princess Stasie's voice was musical and the tones carried. I caught two parts of sentences that set me thinking: "The concession is really mine, you know" and "Yes—with another name—the Fountain of Youth Company—something like that."

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I jumped at a conclusion. The princess had deserted Cadman. Dr. Griffith was not only young and good-looking, but he was the logical successor to Dr. Sanford's practise. These two might combine rejuvenation and beautification. As I watched Griffith, talking earnestly and inaudibly, and the sparkle of the dark eyes of the princess, I felt confirmed in this idea.

It was some time after this strange breakfast that the clerk at the desk informed Carter that his schooner with several thousand cases aboard had arrived in Little Peconic from Nassau. There was no secret about his liquor-running at the Lodge. Ten minutes later Carter, muffled to the ears in a huge ulster, was leaving in his coupé to open his house in Shinnecock Hills so that the stuff might be safely stowed in his strong-room cellar.

In the glass sun-room about the entrance I heard him whisper to Asta, "Then you'll be at the rectory, dear, at four?"

She smiled up at him. "Yes, John."

They saw me. Otherwise I am sure he would have kissed her.

THE storm had subsided. It was a gray day. The sandy soil had absorbed the torrents of moisture almost immediately. Yet, though it was an ideal day for shooting, that seemed to be the last thing in any one's mind.

Kennedy had about made up his mind, now that Waldo had dug the flivver out of the sand, to go over to the village and intercept the reply to his telegram before it was broadcast by the rural central over the telephone, when a furniture van pulled up at the Lodge.

I gasped. Two men were carrying in a wicker basket, one of the gruesome objects undertakers use for handling bodies.

"Tuthill," read Kennedy on the side of the van. "That was the name of the undertaker—who happens to be in the furniture business in the village, too."

My first gasp was nothing compared to my second. The two men opened the basket in the hall and began taking out bottle after bottle of liquor. The van was loaded with it—the supply of the Lodge for the coming summer, which Carter was providing.

I marveled at this example of Long Island thrift. Tuthill himself had been out already in his flivver. He knew he had to send for the body of Sanford and he had delayed because he also knew his van would have to make the trip out to the Lodge with its precious freight of bottles. He was killing two birds at once. I smiled. This would certainly have pleased the prohibition director who had resorted to page advertisements in the papers warning in black type against "Smuggling Bottled Death!" Here it was in that wicker basket.

In the trophy room now Dr. Griffith was busy superintending the preparations to remove the body of Sanford as the basket made its slow trips from the van to the cellar. Cadman showed great interest in the movers and their freight as the very genuine-looking bottles were unpacked and stowed in the wine cellar.

Kennedy had been watching an opportunity to do a little second-story work. It came now with every one excited over the hootch. As I stood lookout he began by picking the lock to the room of Cadman. Inside he tried the bolt on the door between that suite and the princess's.

"Unbolted on this side. Bolted on the other. Keep the hall door at a crack, Walter. Let me know if any one is coming."

He started to open a chiffonier, went through it, was just about to open a big closet, when I raised my hand. "Sh! Cadman—himself! My word! He is at Barytinsky's lock—with a pass key!"

I closed the door softly and waited for him to get in. That would give us a chance to slip out into the hall safely.

SUDDENLY the communicating door opened. Craig had not bolted our side. I saw the back of a girl, still peeping into Barytinsky's room. She shut the door, shot the bolt softly, and turned with a smile, clutching to her bosom a packet of letters. Then she saw us. The smile faded. It was Asta Harley. But she kept her poise.

"Some more poison-pen letters?" whispered Craig.

"No. John Carter's love letters to the princess." She said it with an obvious challenge.

"May I ha . them for safe keeping?" demanded Kennedy.

She drew away toward the door through which she had come. "No!"

There was a sudden exclamation of anger from the next room. "Sh!" cautioned

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Asta. "The princess!" Asta smoothed the bosom of her dress furtively over the packet. "Do they show?"

"Armand!" Anastasia's voice was biting, bitter. "How dare you! What are you here for? That little box is open! Come—hand over those letters—or I'll call the whole house!"

"I haven't got them," protested Cadman's voice.

"You lie! Give them to me! Hurry!"

Kennedy saw his chance. He opened the hall door quietly and we three slipped out of Cadman's room.

"The box was open, like that, when I came in."

"You thought the game was up! You would leave me—flat! Steal the one weapon I have to get money!"

"Then—you read *my* letters?"

"Armand, you are a fool!"

Down the hall now we could hear steps. It was Griffith. "What's all the row?"

He saw us coming the other way. Cadman and the princess saw us. It was the only thing that averted a fight.

The princess glared at Asta. "It takes a woman to see through your devilish ways, you clay-faced child!"

"I may be a child," retorted Asta sweetly. "But you can't despise that so much. You work hard enough to acquire the appearance of one!"

Cadman shrugged and turned toward the grill again. There was a call for Griffith to know whether Sanford's body was ready. The princess glared but said nothing. A second later she slammed her door.

Waldo, who had seen enough to make gossip for a whole winter, came to tell us that he was ready to drive us to the village and, as every one at the Lodge was on guard now, Kennedy decided to go.

At the telegraph office no message had yet been received but Kennedy left orders that any answer was to be brought to Conklin's pharmacy.

SINCE prohibition the drug store and the garage divide the gossip that once belonged to the saloon. Kennedy sought judiciously to draw out Conklin and we found that Griffith had indeed been there the night before. Even a direct question failed to elicit a clue to any can of chloroform, however. Our conversation drifted toward the attitude of the county toward the rum runners.

"They're tricky," commented the pharmacist cautiously.

A customer dropped in. We learned that Sanford's body was now at Tuthill's being prepared for its journey to New York.

A boy on a bicycle stopped at the door. "Telegram for Mr. Kennedy. Is he here?"

Craig took the envelope, opened it, and read the message.

Two men entered the store.

"Here's Waldo!"

"Hello, Willetts! Mr. Kennedy, this is Sheriff Willetts." Waldo did not seem to know the other man.

"Want you to meet Mr. Boyle, of the Internal Revenue office—Waldo Penny," nodded Willetts. "Boyle tells me I have the right to call any citizens we need. You see, there's been a tip to the revenooers that a rum runner's unloading down at the Old Landing."

"But I'm busy, Sheriff, with Mr. Kennedy."

"Can't help it. I appoint you special deputy, under my orders, see? Now, come along."

Waldo looked ruefully at Kennedy. This was an untoward end of a perfect day to him. "Maybe you could get out of it, sir. I can't. They'll get *me* in court—contempt, or somethin'."

"Mr. Kennedy!"

Conklin was holding the telephone. He seemed bursting with importance as he handed over the receiver.

"That Asta Harley out to the Lodge has disappeared. It was Mr. Carter callin' from the rectory." Conklin's eyes expanded as he began to build on it. "They ain't seen nothin' of her at the Lodge. Nobody ain't seen her leave. She ain't there. Where is she?"

Kennedy had shoved the telegram into his pocket and after a few seconds of hasty conversation was back with us.

"How did she get away?" I asked eagerly.

Kennedy thought a moment. "There was one way. Asta, also, must have been carried out in that wicker basket!"

"But where?"

"There is one place to go. That van was working down at the Landing. Don't

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argue, Waldo. Go with Boyle, now. We'll go with you!"

In the grayness verging on dusk we climbed into Waldo's car, following the other. Over the heather hills of Shinnecock we sped. They must have almost completed the unloading of the rum runner by this time. Would we get there before the schooner cast off?

As Penny's flivver bore down the road leading to the dock following the sheriff's car, we could hear the little gas engine that raised the sails on the schooner, put-a-put, put-a-put.

"Getting under way," cried Waldo. "We better hurry and try an' surprise 'em!"

Already the mainsail, patched and mildewed, was flapping in the winter wind, as the schooner lay off the decrepit dock. At the shore end stood the van, engine running. Farther up was parked a rather flashy maroon sport car.

"The revenooers!"

At the shout the van began to move. It happened quicker than I can tell it. It made straight for us. The sheriff's car ahead was run off the road; Waldo's flivver piled up on top of it.

I felt myself hurled through the air. Also I found that a revenue man can swear just as fluently as a rum runner. It did no good. The van kept right on. As I sat up, dazed, I caught sight of Craig, Penny, the sheriff and Boyle crawling from the wreckage.

"Duck, Walter, quick!" shouted Craig.

I flopped behind the wreckage as bullets from the dock whizzed overhead. It was a close call. By the time I had my gun the van was far up the road. We couldn't follow.

"Pick your man and clip his ear!" muttered Craig.

We delivered a volley, then another. All five of us rose and made a dash over the dock. The volleys or the surprise did it. The crew at the shore end broke for the woods that ran down on that side. A few scattered shots kept them going.

Kennedy leaped aboard the schooner. It seemed empty, both of rum runners and rum. I saw Craig pause, intently.

"Did you hear anything?" he asked.

"Sounded like moaning in the hold. Maybe we got one!"

Down the hatch sprang Craig and we followed. There, stretched motionless, was the body of a woman under a dirty piece of old sail. Kennedy raised the sail cloth. Underneath was the pretty face of Asta Harley, pale, with blood clots on a cut on her head.

"Is she—alive?" I asked anxiously as Craig dropped down to feel her pulse, listen to her heart.

"Yes—coming to."

ASTA moved. Her lips seemed to try to frame a word. I listened. "The grip—grip!" Then she slipped away into faintness again. I looked about the hold. There was no bag there, certainly.

"Help me with her up on deck out of this smell of bilge," panted Kennedy. Then, as we laid her on the deck, he motioned. "Quick—look in that sport car. Maybe it's there."

Sure enough, in the maroon car was a bag, a huge one. Asta was still unconscious as I lugged and tugged it down the dock. Kennedy cleansed the wound and bound it up as best he could, trying to revive her with a little brandy from the cabin of the rum runner.

Down the road which we had come now tore a closed car. As it came to a stop I saw that the princess had her head out of the door, full of curiosity. She almost fell out when she saw who we were. But it was too late to get away.

"Did—did they get him?" she stammered.

Kennedy did not stop to inquire who "he" was. "No—but we got here in time to save Asta."

The princess turned as if she would have gone. Just then the heavy coupé rolled up, blocking the road, and Carter hopped out.

"Then they didn't get the van?" he panted. He caught sight of Asta. "My god! Is she badly hurt?"

Kennedy motioned to me to keep him away and quiet as he brought Asta around.

There was a deep-lunged throbbing as of a car with muffler cut out. Up the road along which the van had fled now I could make out a man in the uniform of a state trooper hanging on to that identical van. The van stopped and the trooper, gun in hand, came across, Griffith on one side of him, Cadman on the other.

The instant Griffith caught sight of Asta lying on our coats on the wharf he dropped beside her and took up with a more

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practised hand the work that Kennedy had been doing.

Anastasia faced Cadman scornfully. "So —you leave me—alone—to shift for myself—while you disappear—safe—in Nassau—St. Pierre-Miquelon—anywhere—eh? Then you change your plan—to get rid of her—eh?" She paused. "If they can smuggle in rum, drugs, Chinese, anything into the country, what is it to shanghai people *out*?"

Asta opened her eyes, saw Griffith, smiled weakly, then with an effort whispered, "Did—he—get—away?"

"No. The princess told me. I gave the tip to the revenue men. Then we covered the roads with troopers. They've brought him back on the van."

"And the grip?"

"Over there. I see it."

Asta was getting stronger. Carter was now on the other side of her. She saw him and smiled.

"I never did get to the rectory, John. It was all right. I wasn't going to marry you—just going to give you these." Weakly she plucked at the packet of letters in her bosom, the packet of foolish letters he had written to Princess Stasie. "I got them. Then I thought I had a chance to search Cadman's room. But he surprised me—knocked me out with chloroform, bribed your men, dragged me off here in the van, before I came to."

"Letters?" Carter stammered.

Kennedy had pulled the telegram from his pocket. "My man Clews in the city whom I use for investigations wires me that he finds from the soviet trade representative that the Caucasian clay concession had a purpose. One of the surest ways to attack capitalism is to involve capitalists in scandals."

Asta smiled at Kennedy, too, now. "I was a little sore when you came into it. I had everything going so nicely. I wanted all the credit with the Department of Justice. I'm a good operative—really!"

"Department of Justice!" echoed Carter blankly.

"Yes. She's clever," cut in Kennedy. "I had to learn that from my agent in New York myself. Sanford had made inquiries secretly of the Department of Justice, and Asta Harley had been assigned to the case."

Asta nodded. "Once, when he had the princess under an anesthetic, what she said confirmed his suspicions."

Kennedy smiled down at her. "I think you will find," he said, "that Asta Harley wrote those letters herself, that she did it to break up this gang and Love, Incorporated, too. It was her way of doing the job she had set herself to do for the department—to protect foolish, impressionable American millionaires. All but that letter placed before Sanford."

Craig opened and dug into the grip that I had set on the dock. He drew out a pair of heavy Cordovan leather shoes and under them a pair of gray golf stockings, rolled up tightly. As he turned them out, I saw that the shoes, although new, were still wet—and faded. The stockings, also wet, were almost bleached.

Then I realized it. They had been worn on the roof in the rain. That was how they had got wet. When the wearer had gone into the room as the chlorine was beginning to dissipate out of a partly open window, with only a bit of the gas, heavier than air, remaining close to the floor, the wet shoes and stockings had been bleached. It was then that the murderer had placed the Griffith-Asta letter on the table, the letter itself unaffected by the bleaching gas.

"That letter," remarked Kennedy, "was written on Asta's own paper with her own machine by the real criminal, the attacker, the international blackmailer and swindler, the 'Hawk'—Armand Cadman."

"Yes—after he began to realize who I was," put in Asta. "I was getting desperate. As a last resort I took Dr. Sanford into my confidence. I asked him and he promised to tell John Carter the truth about it—then he was killed."

Anastasia had turned on Cadman in a fury. "There are some things, too, that I can tell, if they want to know," she hissed at him, "about his Love, Incorporated, scheme!"

I saw that Griffith had taken Asta's hand. It was not her pulse that he was taking, either. She did not withdraw her hand. Asta was feeling better. He propped her head up a bit and as he did so he smiled into her eyes.

Craig Kennedy's next adventure leads from a brilliant society gathering to a sordid dope ring and then to a motion-picture studio—in January EVERYBODY'S, out December 15.

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The Elopement

Love Rues the World. And Yet, at Times, the World Has a Word or Two to Say

By Alexander Porterfield

Illustration by C. H. Taffs

IT WAS a London evening, wet, morose, and listless. Lights in Regent Street twinkled languidly in the soft feathery rain; pavements, the waterproof capes of police constables, the tops of taxis as they skidded round that long ingratiating curve into Piccadilly Circus were the same shiny black; dripping umbrellas everywhere. Passing faces gleamed a moment in the darkness, distinct and pale and wistful, and were gone, like petals blown against some wall of old wet stone. All sound, all footsteps, voices, the slur of wheels, the stately chime of clocks in London steeples, seemed to be smothered utterly in that damp, enormous, apathetic silence.

Mr. Horatio Crale was dining at the Café Madrid—that is, he had already dined well and wisely, and was now lighting a large Corona Corona cigar in the calm manner of one who is perfectly satisfied with that state of life to which it has pleased God to call him, as indeed he was. The detestableness of the evening bothered him not one bit. Outside, in Regent Street, his magnificent motor car stood waiting to take him wherever he wanted to go, and he was free to go and come exactly as it suited him. He would be comfortably enveloped in a vast fur coat, a luxurious fur rug would cover his correctly attired knees, a white silk scarf of a superb silkiness would assist the plate-glass windows of his magnificent motor car in protecting his person from the London weather.

But, as a matter of fact, Mr. Horatio Crale was in no hurry to go anywhere. The cigar he was smoking, the curtained warmth and quiet of the Café Madrid, the famous Napoleon brandy he had just sampled, contributed immensely to his sense of satisfied well-being.

The celebrated restaurant was practically empty. A few people lingered still at their several tables, but, for the most part, those who had dined there had left, and only a woman in black, two stout rather red-faced old gentlemen discussing a bottle of port, and Mr. Horatio Crale remained; a profound and sanctuary-like quiet prevailed. At the cynical and ceremonious doors a solitary *maître d'hôtel* looked at his watch, and yawned.

Two less illustrious lords a short way off conversed together silently, in a bored contemptuous fashion, keeping, however, an attentive eye upon the woman in black, the two red-faced old gentlemen, and Mr. Horatio Crale. Not that they thought them likely to depart without settling their various bills; no! They were attentive simply in case the red-faced old gentlemen should demand another bottle of the Café Madrid's renowned port, or Mr. Horatio Crale a fresh Corona Corona cigar. They were the acolytes at that famous altar; the red-faced old gentlemen, the woman in black, and Mr. Horatio Crale were the worshipers, and the fact of their presence there was in itself sufficient and unassailable evidence of their rightness and distinction.

Mr. Horatio Crale embodied in his person and appearance all the outward and visible properties of these two things. He was carefully dressed, clean-shaven, calm, and condescending of demeanor. His ears

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were small and pointed, and they were set close to his head. In age he was thirty-eight or forty, and the expression on his face was youthful, bland, and worldly.

Mr. Crale was very rich. He had cozy rooms just off Jermyn Street, with a man to look after them, a motor car, and everything he had always wanted to have and never had had until he had gone to America. He had gone out at the end of the war, and had, at the start, made a little money by hard work. Then he made a good deal on a tip to buy Consolidated Copper at 43, pyramiding at 53 and 63, and went into a syndicate formed for the purpose of taking over some profitable war contracts and made more money than ever. In two or three years he was rich, very rich, and, since he was compelled to suit nobody's convenience but his own, he returned to England with a vague idea of politics, a place in the country, and marrying. By way of a beginning, he joined a good club. He astounded old friends by standing them excellent dinners instead of trying to borrow ten shillings. He went to the most expensive tailor in London, and turned up at Ascot in a pale gray top hat.

GRADUALLY, however, he abandoned all idea of politics and, as summer succeeded spring, the melancholy but not disagreeable absence of any startling matrimonial opportunities became more and more apparent. Now and then, that autumn, sitting before a late fire and reflecting upon the possible destinies of various young ladies he had known, Mr. Horatio Crale would encounter a mood of delicate regretfulness, and wonder what had happened to the girl to whom he had almost been engaged at Eastbourne in 1911, for instance, or the one who lived in Regent's Park.

It was a trifle disconcerting therefore to discover presently that he had forgotten most of their names, though it was nothing more than that. Mr. Horatio Crale was like an expert balloonist; the more sandbags he flung overboard in the shape of such inconsistent memories the higher his spirits rose; and it was in this somewhat exalted temper of pensive meditation that he was smoking that Corona Corona cigar of his after dinner at the Café Madrid. He had just dismissed from his mind all recollection of a girl he had met once in Paris and another he had known at Gorleston years before the war, in order to think about Kitty Blake, when a clear cool voice interrupted these proposed proceedings by saying, in a strangely familiar tone:

"Waiter! My bill, please."

It was the woman in black. She had turned to beckon one of the less illustrious lords, and displayed for Mr. Horatio Crale's benefit the profile of a pure, pale, exquisitely chiseled, oval face—extraordinarily like Kitty's. Mr. Horatio Crale hurriedly polished his monocle and readjusted it—that voice!

The woman in black paid her bill, tipped the waiter with deliberate care, and rose; Mr. Horatio Crale instantly perceived that she was tall, slender, smartly but not expensively gowned; he also perceived that she was lovely to behold; and certainly like Kitty. Of course, it could only be an astounding coincidence—if that.

Nevertheless, astounding or not, Mr. Horatio Crale continued to stare at the lady in black with the utmost eagerness, and, almost immediately, dialogue of a rather gay effective sort began to suggest itself to his mind. Then their gaze met. It was Kitty.

"Horry!" she exclaimed. "It isn't—it *can't* be!"

Mr. Horatio Crale scrambled to his feet.

"After all these years," the lady in black went on, "to meet like this! Isn't it curious?"

"Curious!" said Mr. Horatio Crale. "Well, I—I can hardly believe it is you, really."

There was a sudden short pause.

"I suppose you *are* Kitty Blake?" said Mr. Horatio Crale presently, and was instantly disturbed to see she shook her head.

"Not now. I'm Kitty Fallowes."

"Oh, I see."

"I've been married over five years—almost six. You must come and see us."

"Rather! Where do you live?"

"Weybridge. It's quite a ways out, I'm afraid—the fact is, I lost my train to-night and it's such a wretched evening I thought I'd have a bust and come here to dine. I haven't been here," she added, "for years."

Mr. Horatio Crale looked enormously sympathetic.

"Oh, I say!" he ejaculated—he could not think why. "Not years!"

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"Years," replied Mrs. Fallowes firmly. "And it's such a wretched night——"

"Awful," interpolated Mr. Horatio Crale. "Perfectly awful!"

"So I thought I'd be extravagant for once—and come here."

"Quite right, too," agreed Mr. Horatio Crale. "I don't blame you a bit. And, besides, we wouldn't have met if you hadn't popped into this jolly old beanery for a bite, would we?"

"I suppose we wouldn't," said Mrs. Fallowes, glancing reluctantly at the watch on her wrist. "But the sad part of it is, Horry, that I simply must fly now we have met or I'll miss this train. It's too wonderful to have seen you again—so prosperous, too, my dear! Can't you come for tea sometime soon, so I can hear all your news?"

"No time like the present."

"Don't be silly. I can't miss *all* the trains."

"Why not? I'll pole you down to Weybridge in my car," said Mr. Horatio Crale.

"Your *what?*"

"My car," said Mr. Horatio Crale carelessly. "Here, waiter! Bring my bill."

KITTY FALLOWES regarded him in silence for a moment with perplexed bright blue eyes, as she vainly endeavored to reconcile her memory of the earlier Mr. Crale, who frequently lacked the not particularly vast sum of fourpence, with the present Mr. Crale, who was resplendently attired and owned a motor car.

"Are you certain you can get me down to Weybridge?" she said finally, and Mr. Horatio Crale smiled.

"Hope springs infernal," he remarked, struggling valiantly into his large fur coat. "It's a Sheffield Simplex," he added, as he led her past obsequious lords of varying degree into the vestibule and out where that magnificent piece of purring machinery stood, actually and obviously waiting.

The chauffeur adroitly tucked the fur rug round her knees and shut the door; Kitty watched him climbing back into his seat in front much in the manner of one watching the progress of a dream; her state of mind might best be described as bordering immediately upon the chaotic. Mr. Horatio Crale took up the speaking tube and said, "Weybridge," in a calm voice; instantly, the magnificent car shot out smoothly into the steady stream of traffic.

It was no dream—she was unmistakably being driven to Weybridge with Mr. Horatio Crale in Mr. Horatio Crale's own magnificent car! She looked helplessly through the window; Regent Street reassuringly preserved its aspect of dreary reality; there were dark pools of rain everywhere, and the unending procession of umbrellas all tilted at exactly the same angle reminded her of Du Maurier's illustration of the funeral in *Trilby*—or was it in *Peter Ibbetson?* Anyhow, it was very dismal and depressing, and as the car turned into Piccadilly Kitty snuggled down among the cushions in her corner with a sudden sense of odd, incredulous relief.

THE gay effective dialogue which had suggested itself to Mr. Horatio Crale earlier in the evening seemed, as they were carried swiftly and silently through Knightsbridge, through Hammersmith, Putney, and westwards past Wimbledon Common, rather more imbecile than anything else, and Mr. Crale therefore was a little silent. It was tremendously dark; the dark sky was framed by darker woods; the road as deserted as though some Jack Shepard, or Captain Macheath, haunted it still. There was something sinister in the blackness of Richmond Park. Hardly a light showed through that intense and somber fabric of shadow and silence anywhere. In fact, it occurred to Mr. Horatio Crale that they might be in some strange land for all the familiar countryside, and the blurred brightness of Kingston consequently presented itself to their gaze invested with enormous and hitherto unnoticed charm. Mr. Crale lit a cigarette and glanced at his companion.

It was still raining, foggy withal, and against the soft, misty, golden radiance of the High Street her profile, as she stared fixedly ahead, was delicately dark and adorable in the window—like a saint's, haloed in some pale-tinted church window-pane. Mr. Horatio Crale was speedily aware of a disturbed reflectiveness. She had not changed; she had looked like that the first time he saw her, fifteen years back—a slip of a girl, clear-eyed, slender, boyishly breasted, fair. The beagle puppy she was chasing had scampered down the room and through the window, disappearing in

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the garden outside, and Mr. Crale remembered that he had risen, blushing.

"I'm afraid no one let you know I was here," he had said—how her face recalled all that!

"I'm afraid they didn't," she replied. "But then I suppose you're waiting to see mother." She held out a slim but very grubby hand. "I'm Kitty," she added.

"I'm Horatio Crale."

"What a beautiful name!" she exclaimed. "My brother's name is Stephen, but I think yours is much jollier—more romantic, if you know what I mean."

Mr. Crale, who had been named after the late Lord Nelson rather than the vanished Mr. Bottomley, remembered that he had bowed. The incongruous self-possession of that young lady of seventeen was a little disconcerting.

"I've always wanted to know some one called Horatio," Kitty went on dispassionately, as she smoothed out her tousled yellow hair. "And that's jolly, too."

"Jolly?"

"Yes—getting what you want. I suppose," she added candidly, "I suppose that's why I like you."

"Well, it's providential, anyway," Mr. Crale replied.

"Providential. Providential," she repeated. "Does that come from *provideo*, or——"

"*PROVIDEO*," said Mr. Crale hurriedly. He had been thankful when Kitty's aunt entered the room a moment or two later and interrupted what threatened to be a systematic and somewhat exhaustive *viva voce* examination in Latin prose. But that had been the beginning—what a lot of water had passed under the bridge since then!

Mr. Horatio Crale was immediately plunged into a profound though not unpleasant dejection. His magnificent car had left Kingston now, and was rolling rapidly down the Portsmouth Road; darkness surrounded them once more. If she had only waited! They could have had that little place in the country they'd planned; they could have gone south every winter, to Cannes or Monte Carlo; they could have had the most charming of flats in town, anything. But of course it was useless thinking about all that—she was married. There were kids, probably—and Mr. Crale thought a trifle more agreeably of his own comfortable quiet rooms off Jermyn Street.

"You haven't changed a bit," he said suddenly. "Not a bit—in fifteen years."

It was not at all what he intended saying; indeed, Mr. Horatio Crale entertained no particular definite desire to say anything, but just then it seemed the only thing possible he could say, and he said it.

"I—I often wondered," he continued presently, "what you looked like—if you had changed much."

"You have," replied Kitty. "You've changed frightfully. I hardly knew you."

"Oh!" said Mr. Crale blankly.

"But you haven't told me anything about yourself, and we're almost home," she said in a reproachful voice, after a short moment of silent communion.

Mr. Horatio Crale remarked something about America and luck, and relapsed into speechlessness.

"Are you—are you *married?*"

"No," said Mr. Crale.

"Engaged?"

"No."

"I can't imagine you married," murmured Kitty.

"Why not?" asked Mr. Crale, who considered this somewhat unreasonable, in the circumstances. "After all, *you're* married."

"Oh, that's different," answered Kitty promptly. "I say, do you remember the tree we planted in mother's garden, years ago?"

"Yes, of course."

"It's dead now. But—

"Oh, the dream, the dream of youth and flowers
Time cannot take away."

THEY were silent then, looking out of opposite windows into the night; and Mr. Crale was gloriously thrilled by the discovery that he was holding Kitty's hand. He could not think how it had happened; indeed, he did not care especially. Ideas—delightful ridiculous ideas—wandered vaguely but rapidly across his mind.

They would have a yacht, that little place in the country, a villa in the south of France, the most charming of flats in town, or perhaps it would be better to live abroad entirely at first. Not that they would care what people thought—no! They would be too happy for that. And, as a

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matter of fact, why should people think anything of it at all? Why? Mr. Crale—just at that moment—was quite incapable of supplying an answer, but a certain uneasiness crept into his reflections on all fours. Rather soberly, he supposed people would think a good deal about it, in one way and another. And the worst of it was, they would probably have a good deal to say, too. Not directly, of course, but in a vastly more effective oblique manner.

With a sudden turn of the road, however, they were in Weybridge, and Mr. Crale hastily ended his speculations on this subject. Lights were already gleaming wistfully behind the leafless trees; they passed a man, walking. Kitty sat up.

"Stop here," she said, gently freeing her hand. "I'll walk the rest of the way—it's only a step."

Mr. Horatio Crale peered through the window, and presently made out a trim box hedge in the ghostly darkness, a white gate, and over them some ghostlier elms.

"Not here," he said protestingly. "My dear girl, it's black as ink and probably muddy underfoot."

"Never mind," said Kitty.

"I hate to let you go like this."

"It doesn't matter—really."

The man opened the door, and they descended. A damp rich smell of sodden leaves and wet trees greeted them; the feathery rain was soft and cool on their cheeks. Kitty held out a slim gloved hand.

"Good night, Horry. It's lovely of you to bring me all the way down here—and lovely to have seen you, after all these years."

"Can't I come again?"

"I'd love you to."

"To-morrow? May I come to-morrow? I could easily run down for tea."

"Come for luncheon, then," she murmured, and disappeared suddenly in the tremendous shadow of the trim box hedge.

NATURALLY, they saw one another often after that. Three or four and even five days a week Mr. Horatio Crale's magnificent car—which was a blue cabriolet of the very latest design—could be seen outside Kitty's gate, either early in the forenoon, in order to convey her townwards for luncheon, or later in the day, in order to take Mr. Crale himself home from tea.

The Falloweses lived in a large yellow stucco house of the Regency period standing well back from the road behind some tall elms and a great amount of shrubbery, with the garden sloping down to one of the backwaters of the river. Chiefly because the shrubbery consisted of rhododendrons, massed syringas, lilacs, and evergreens, apparently, the place had been called The Laurels: at any rate, Kitty detested it. She shared Mr. Horatio Crale's views about a flat in town—in Knightsbridge, perhaps, or Westminster. But Mr. Henry Fallowes, who was a hard-working barrister at the Chancery Bar, said he had quite enough of London in the course of the day; he wanted to get out of it in the evening; and, besides, the golf at Weybridge was good and the tennis excellent, and anyhow there was always the river.

These attractions, however, did not reconcile Kitty to her residence at The Laurels. She did not like golf and she loathed tennis—she did not even esteem the decorative qualities of the black and white swans on the backwater at their garden's edge, and said so, frankly.

As a matter of fact, it was not so bad in summer. But in winter!

Well, Kitty considered it little short of abominable. "It rains almost every day," she told Mr. Horatio Crale, "and when it doesn't, people call. I can't think which is worse." It stood to reason that Mr. Crale was properly sympathetic, if not very helpful, although his contacts with Kitty inevitably lured him into some indiscretion or other. Her slender loveliness, her manifestly unhappy marriage, her dependence upon him worked in Mr. Horatio Crale like some inverted kind of alchemy, altering the gold of his comfortable existence into so much worthless dross.

"Do you ever think what life might have been like, Horry," she asked one afternoon, as they strolled along the edge of the river, looking at the swans, "if—if things had turned out differently?"

She rested a hand on his arm, and looked intently at the ground.

"Sometimes," replied Mr. Crale.

"So do I."

"Often," incautiously added Mr. Crale,

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and stopped. This was dangerous ground; and he thought desperately about his pleasant rooms in St. James's, his club, and the kind of people one meets drifting at a loose end round the Continent—that is, he supposed they'd have to drift round the Continent, if it came to that. Still, it hardly could—besides, it was far too much to ask a woman. A belated firmness came to Mr. Crale. "Often," he continued, "but I suppose I shouldn't. It's—it's quite useless."

"*Is* it?"

"Quite—at least, I——"

AND then he was aware of an irrational and overpowering desire to take her in his arms and carry her off to his magnificent motor car and drive away as fast as that admirable piece of mechanism and the Home Secretary would allow him. "I don't know," he repeated, his voice implying that exactly the opposite was the case, and taking her hands in the masterful fashion of the victorious male.

"Isn't it—isn't it for you to answer that?" he asked.

"I can't," she said simply.

"But you're not happy, you don't care a rap for your husband, you do care for me, and, God knows, I care for you and have, for years!"

Mr. Horatio Crale made a gesture of despair: then, letting her hands fall, he took her quietly into his arms and kissed her. She did not kiss him, but she permitted him to kiss her, her eyes closed, her warm body relaxed.

"I adore you," he whispered, and kissed her again.

An evanescent gust of wind stirred the branches of the bare elms, softly ruffling the pale sky-lit water which mirrored the last fading gleam of winter sunshine; except for that it was very still. The faint glow in the west lit Kitty's face like some uncomprehended inward glamour; she seemed transfigured; and he was proud and thrilled that her eyes were shining as they met his, that she was of the slenderest loveliness and grace. It was as if, in that exquisite uncertainty of light, he saw for the first time how really and supremely beautiful she was. Reassured, triumphant, and astounded, he began making plans for the next day.

To these Kitty displayed a pensive half-averted profile. "Horry," she said suddenly, "don't send the car down for me to-morrow. I'll come up by train."

"Good heavens—why?" exclaimed Mr. Crale.

"Well, people are talking, and I don't want people to talk now."

But Mr. Crale was inclined to argue. If people wanted to talk, he observed, they'd talk anyway—and wasn't it rather a pity to undertake a tiresome trip by train just because Weybridge happened to disapprove of a motor car?

"It isn't the car," explained Kitty. "Henry has two or three relations living here, and a good many friends; naturally, they think it's their duty to look after his interests in his absence."

"Oh!" said Mr. Crale uneasily.

"So I'd better come up by train to-morrow," continued Kitty, looking at the sky in an impersonal, casual sort of way, "and you'd better meet me at the restaurant, in case I come up with anyone I know, or, what's more important, with anyone who knows me. By the by," she added, "where shall we lunch?"

"The Madrid."

"I THINK," remarked Kitty, on the heels of hurried reflection, "I think we'd better lunch somewhere else. General de Gex, who lives next door, is lunching there with his son, who's come home from India."

"Claridge's then," suggested Mr. Crale.

She nodded, slipping an arm through his as they turned to walk back to the house. "I dare say that's safe enough," she assented. "I hope so, at any rate, as we must decide what we're going to do. We can't go on like this."

"Kitty, let me take you away, out of it all—out of all this beastly subterfuge and make-believe. I want you, I simply can't live without you; I know we'll be happy, and——"

"Horry, please!"

"And—and this infernal sort of thing can only spoil the gloriousness of caring for each other," went on Mr. Crale, with agitated vehemence and several gestures of extraordinary emotion. It was none of it what he had intended saying; in fact, he was aware even then that the more he said the more irrevocably he committed himself,

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but he did not care. He wanted to commit himself.

He wanted tremendously to possess this beautiful, languid, slender being at his side, and some chill fragrance in the air, some witchery of stillness and caressing light and fading sky, some delicate evasion in her glance, urged him on. "This *dodging* people," he was saying, more and more passionately, "and dining and lunching where they won't be! This confounded *furtiveness!* That's the hateful part about it—this furtiveness!"

"Horry—please——"

"Well, don't you think so?" demanded Mr. Crale brutally.

Her gaze, as it encountered his, was briefly and gently reproachful. "Is that a serious question?" she asked in a low voice.

Mr. Crale capitulated instantly. He was distressed and stupefied that they should so soon be upon the verge of a misunderstanding. "No, no," he said, "it isn't. I can't think why I said it, except that I care for you so frightfully. I'm afraid——"

"Afraid?"

"Yes. That I—er—that I imagine you care too."

"I do," said Kitty. "Terribly."

There was an abrupt pause. It was darker now; twilight had fallen, and only overhead in the clear, faded, topaz-tinted sky were the trees anything but thin tremulous shadows. Lights were beginning to glimmer mistily in the distance; the river gurgled softly, sleepily in the reeds, a pale reflected gold; and over everything lay that spell of quiet—cool, breathless, and immense. Even the rooks were still.

"I do care," repeated Kitty finally, "but don't you think you'd better go? I'm afraid it's getting rather late."

And, squeezing his arm tenderly in hers, she led him up the sloping garden to the gate, where the magnificent motor car was waiting, its headlights blazing in the dusk in dazzling and conspicuous indiscretion.

THAT was a Monday; by the following week they had decided to elope. And, having so decided, it could hardly be said that either Mr. Crale or Kitty was particularly elated at the prospect, though with an obstinacy of which the English alone are capable, they shared this lack of enthusiasm only in secret.

They decided to elope on Tuesday, partly because Mr. Henry Fallowes had announced his intention of dining in town on that day, and partly because it provided Kitty with an escape from dining at Mrs. Van Buren's on Wednesday—an event to which she looked forward with the liveliest consternation. They were to motor up to town early in the evening, catch the boat-train for Harwich, and arrive in Paris by way of the Hook of Holland Friday, where Mr. Crale's man, Hunt, was to meet them with the greater part of their luggage and the magnificent motor car.

And thus it was that Mr. Crale's magnificent motor car stopped boldly at the trim white gate of The Laurels one Tuesday evening; Mr. Crale himself, in his fur coat, his hat tilted rakishly to one side, descended; his manner was one of obvious agitation.

"If you'll shut off the engine, Hunt," he remarked, "you needn't wait. You'd better switch off those confounded lights, too. Er—you'll turn up Friday morning, won't you?"

"Certainly, sir," said Hunt.

"Good enough," said Mr. Crale. "And now you'd better shove off."

He sauntered through the gate and up the path to the house, where, however, he delayed the knocker's manifest employment, and stood looking earnestly into the sky. It was a fine clear night with no moon but many stars, and there was a touch of frost in the air. The bare elms were especially ingratiating against the dark—slim graceful things rising to their duty with the nobility of church spires. Mr. Crale nervously, and for several minutes, surveyed the elms; then he knocked upon the door with sudden and rather irrational impatience. It was eventually opened.

"Mrs. Fallowes in?"

"She's in the drorin'-room," replied the woman who had opened the door, and who was evidently unused to that occupation.

Mr. Crale followed her down the hall past three closed doors to one which stood ajar, edged with light. His footsteps sounded extraordinarily loud in the prevailing stillness; Mr. Horatio Crale wondered whether old General What-d'you-call-'im next door could hear him, and hoped he

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The silent security of the house was invaded by a sudden peremptory knocking at the door. It was as though Nemesis had overtaken them.

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couldn't; he rejoiced he had remembered the car's lights. All Weybridge probably was on the watch, he reflected, but at that point of his reflections it occurred to him that what Weybridge thought and said and saw might quite conceivably be interesting although unimportant; in another hour they would have left Weybridge forever.

"In there," said Mr. Crale's guide, and disappeared.

That gentleman tapped on the door. Kitty's voice invited him to "Come in," and he entered a room with three tall French windows he knew opened on the garden, in much the same manner most people go into mourning. Kitty—a slim, pale delightful Kitty in a tweed suit and the most intriguing of hats—jumped to her feet.

"I—I thought you weren't coming," she said.

THEY embraced with apprehensive intensity, Kitty clinging to him in a sudden and somewhat unsettling mood of resignation and relief. "Are you glad, Horry," she breathed, "we're going away together? Are you very glad?"

"Very!" exclaimed Mr. Crale. "Are you?"

"Oh, frightfully!" said Kitty, but she did not say this with any notable conviction.

They kissed again.

Mr. Crale unwound the silk scarf from his neck, and sat down. He was not now especially nervous and, except for a faint filming over of the brightness of his ardor, presented a victorious and agreeable aspect of the male.

"I suppose we'd better start," remarked Kitty, after an interval of silence.

Mr. Crale got up.

"Or would you like a whisky-and-soda first?"

"I'd love one," replied Mr. Crale.

The candles which lighted the square, formal, Regency drawing-room were guttering tragic things in their sconces when he finally put down his glass; out in the hall a clock struck the quarter. "And now," he said in a voice of great resolution, "we really ought to pole on. It's getting late." One candle guttered out completely.

"I suppose we ought to."

They looked at each other across the room; neither moved.

"Sure you won't be sorry?" said Mr. Crale.

Kitty looked at him gravely in silence. Then she said: "Will *you*?"

Mr. Crale crossed the room and took her in his arms. "Of course not, my dearest," he said tenderly, stirred by the intenseness of her gaze, the warmth of her body, her breath on his cheek. "How could I?" For the moment he forgot about his club, the inevitable scandal, the discomfort of it all, conscious only of Kitty's slim, exciting loveliness. "I adore you," he murmured.

"And now," he said presently, "we must shove off."

"My things?"

"Hunt will have 'em at Liverpool Street."

"Passports? Tickets? Everything?"

"Everything," said Mr. Crale.

"Quite sure you don't want another whisky-and-soda?" asked Kitty hopefully.

"Quite," said Mr. Crale, winding his scarf slowly round his neck. "We really ought to get along, anyway." And, as if concurring in this opinion, the clock in the hall struck the half-hour. "You see, it's seven-thirty now," added Mr. Horatio Crale, "and we've got an hour's run ahead of us—perhaps more." The echo of the chime died away, or had almost died away, when the silent security of the house was invaded by a sudden peremptory knocking at the door. It was exactly as though Nemesis, in the combined persons of the police and a postman, had overtaken them.

"Good God! who's that?" exclaimed the startled Mr. Crale, with every symptom of a wild surmise.

"I—I can't imagine," replied Kitty.

"Perhaps it's Fallowes. Perhaps he changed his mind about dinin' in town."

"I doubt it. Besides, Henry isn't thoughtful enough to give us all that warning—he's not that kind of a husband."

"Oh!" said Mr. Crale, but not with any obvious enthusiasm.

"IT MIGHT be the vicar," remarked Kitty; "or the gardener. They usually want something."

As a matter of fact, it was General de Gex. His voice, which possessed a particularly penetrating quality, could be heard with unmistakable distinctness in the hall; that distinguished officer was

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inquiring for the mistress of the house. "Say it's rather important," he informed the maid; "I won't keep her, of course—if I could have just a minute—er—semi-officially, as it were—" The maid's reply was not audible, but in another moment or two a sound of approaching feet, preceded by a few additional remarks on the part of the General, drifted down the hall. "As a J. P. I like to attend to these little things myself. It saves trouble," he added.

MR. HORATIO CRALE'S complexion underwent several immediate changes, going, with chameleon rapidity, from white to crimson and from crimson to a sickly green. The visit of anybody just then would have been exceedingly disturbing, to say the least of it, but a visit admittedly semiofficial on the part of a Justice of the Peace! Probably he had a warrant in his pocket, and a posse of special constables at heel outside. Mr. Crale hurriedly ransacked his brains—was the business of running off with another man's wife a criminal business, or not? People got into the divorce courts, yes, but were they liable to the summary proceedings of the police-court, the ignominy of the dock? The answer to these questions appeared severally to be in the negative; but Mr. Horatio Crale at that critical moment was not putting any great faith in appearances alone. "Meddlesome old ass!" he said vindictively, and hid behind the curtains of the nearest window precipitately.

The General entered the room almost simultaneously—a tall, thin, hook-nosed man of sixty-five with a commanding glance, and an air of distinguished picturesqueness. In his old-fashioned evening cloak, the points of his collar impinging on his cheeks, he looked rather like the late Duke of Wellington, a resemblance upon which he prided himself; he was, however, a little hard of hearing; and his services to his country, since he had retired from the Governor-Generalship of Balta-Sagoda, had been confined chiefly to the Bench at the neighboring Sessions and the sentencing of poachers where the faculties of the Great Duke late in life had been employed in dealing with matters of a livelier character. Nevertheless, it was in the Duke's stately manner that he entered the room, and bowed.

"My dear young lady, I must apologize for this unceremonious hour of calling," he began, "but duty comes before everything—everything."

"Duty?"

The curtains of the nearest window shook as if stirred by some eccentric sudden gust of wind.

"I'll not keep you a minute—the truth is, there's a little matter—an irregularity, so to speak, which, as a Justice of the Peace, I feel bound to bring to your attention and which, as a neighbor, I'm only too glad——"

"Irregularity, General? Here, at The Laurels?"

"The police," said the General, "are compelled to take action in these matters in the—er—in the interests of the community. But a word or two from me, a tip, if you get what I mean——"

"But, good heavens! You can't mean——"

"So you can rectify that little—er—that deviation from the order of things, before it's too late," concluded the General with a benevolent smile. "And no harm's done, what?"

Kitty gazed at him in candid and incredulous bewilderment. "I'm sure we can't be thinking of the same thing," she cried presently. "It's too ridiculous!"

"However," said the General, "I must get back home. So, if you'll excuse the friendliness of an old soldier, and not leave your motor standing at the side of the road after dark without a light—" He broke off, smiling rather more benevolently than before. "Well, no harm's done—none at all," he added. "You understand our position, of course. The police must take notice of such a breach of regulations—so many accidents, you know—special instructions from the Home Office—still, a word to the wise—what?"

Kitty glanced with amused relief toward the window where Mr. Crale had disappeared behind the curtains. "Conscience makes cowards of us all," she remarked for that gentleman's benefit. But Mr. Crale did not hear it; indeed, Mr. Crale had not remained to hear even the General's last reassuring remarks. The window behind him had opened outwards earlier in the course of that distinguished officer's somewhat misleading observations and Mr. Crale, like the Arabs upon another occasion, had silently stolen away.

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The Trail *of the* Chitigau

It Leads to the Discovery That Things Are Often What They Seem

By Ruth Burr Sanborn

MRS. LYMAN'S boarding-house was not only respectable, it was of the elect. Strictly speaking, indeed, we should not have called it a boarding-house at all—Mrs. Lyman would not have liked that. It was, rather, a refined and cultivated home where a few guests of impeccable antecedents were allowed, for a weekly consideration, to establish themselves, and to take each unto himself a room and three meals daily. It was Mrs. Lyman's boast that those who came, came well recommended. Decayed gentlewomen, not too much decayed; professional men, not yet able to maintain bachelor quarters; business women, living inexpensively so that they might save their money for travel; from such respectable ranks was Mrs. Lyman's personnel collected. Mrs. Lyman was fond of saying that they were all like a little family together.

Mrs. Lyman herself was an ideal person to keep a boarding-house that yet was not a boarding-house. She wore black or plain dark blue always, and rubber heels and a net over her hair. She spoke, moreover, in a soft Southern drawl that she had inexplicably brought with her from the middle west, and which could never rasp the nerves of even her most sensitive guests. Her round, slightly freckled face and turned-up nose were the outward and visible signs of a good nature that could not be shaken.

Under such circumstances it was only natural that the personnel of Mrs. Lyman's house should seldom change. It was therefore something in the way of an event when Mr. Allyn Piper moved in and settled in the back parlor. Mr. Allyn Piper was an anthropologist. It was only when Mrs. Lyman had made sure, by reference to the dictionary, that anthropology was a respectable pursuit having nothing to do with vivisection, and at Miss Webster's special request had ascertained that he was related, though distantly, to the Allyn-Pipers of Philadelphia, that she considered him at all. For Mrs. Lyman's normally accommodated only five; Mr. Piper would be a sixth. It was a tribute to the excellence of his references and the charm of his manner, as well as to the price which he was willing to pay, that the back parlor was finally placed at his disposal.

On the first night of Mr. Allyn Piper's residence, Mrs. Lyman's guests arrived rather early for dinner. To be more exact, Miss Webster and Miss Laura Pennell came early. They were not curious to see Mr. Piper, but they wanted to be there when he came in.

Miss Webster and Miss Laura Pennell were cousins and lived in the two second fronts with the connecting doors. Miss Webster was a tall thin lady with angles, who gave always the impression of having concealed somewhere about her person a very long and very inflexible ramrod.

Miss Laura Pennell, on the other hand, was a little fluttering person with thin gray hair which only Miss Webster's influence kept her from doing in curls. It was characteristic of both of them that people would as soon have thought of calling her Miss Pennell, as they would have thought of calling her cousin Miss Abigail Webster. Miss Laura was always hovering about Miss Webster with little twitterings of agreement, and little futile twistings of her

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fingers. There was about her an atmosphere of perpetual apology.

Miss Laura's one passion was for Literature as represented by the current magazines and the latest novels. Her favorite authors were Dunstan Murray, John Barton King, Richard Dean Frothingham, and Ethelyn Saunders.

Miss Webster and Miss Laura Pennell seated themselves at the large round table where Mrs. Lyman's little family dined, and fixed an expectant gaze on the door. They waited for five minutes. Then Mrs. Lyman begged to be excused, and herself went to fetch in Miss Ames.

To the other ladies at Mrs. Lyman's, Elizabeth Ames typified romance. She was young; she was attractive; Miss Laura, who was wise in the appearance of heroines, said that she was beautiful. Elizabeth Ames was a merry little person; there was a kind of breeziness about her that shocked, but also pleased, them. She had dark rebellious hair, always somehow slipping loose and curling up about her face in a manner which Miss Webster said was inherently untidy, but—well—not unbecoming. There was bright color in her cheeks, and laughter in her eyes, and she jested on all subjects with a freedom that Miss Webster would not for anything have admitted that she liked.

During the day Elizabeth Ames was confidential secretary to the president of the Hammerford Manufacturing Company. Miss Laura used to say sometimes that she didn't see how Mr. Hammerford had ever managed to be president before Elizabeth went there. In the evenings she was the pride of Mrs. Lyman's household.

Probably no unmarried woman has ever reached the age of fifty, and no married woman the age of thirty-five, without wishing to make a match between somebody and somebody else. The secret bond that drew together Mrs. Lyman and the cousins in the two second floor fronts was their desire to marry off Elizabeth Ames. At first, naturally, they thought of Mr. King, but Mr. King had proved himself unworthy.

"WELL," said Elizabeth, appearing suddenly through the door, as was the way with Elizabeth, "I hear there's a new bird in the cage to-night."

Miss Laura giggled.

"Sh-h!" said Miss Webster. "He'll hear you."

Elizabeth Ames dropped lightly into her chair. She seemed singularly unwearied by seven hours of presidential confidences.

"Well, that's all right," she said. "I didn't say anything bad about him, did I?"

It was almost at this precise moment that Mr. Allyn Piper appeared, hesitating becomingly on the threshold. Mrs. Lyman flew to meet him, to bring him in and present him, to make him feel at home. And this Mr. Piper presently did.

Mr. Allyn Piper was rather a small man—slight without being actually thin, light without being actually fair. He had a small mustache above sensitive lips, and quick bright eyes under rather negligible brows. Mr. Piper talked easily and well, and Mrs. Lyman's little family listened with undisguised enthusiasm.

They hardly noticed when Mr. King came in and slid into the extra seat between Miss Laura and Mr. Allyn Piper. Mrs. Lyman made the introduction in a perfunctory sort of way. Only Elizabeth Ames, from Mr. Piper's right, really addressed him.

"Oh, Mr. King!" she said. "You ought to have got here quicker. Mr. Piper's been telling us all about himself. He's an anthropologist, and he's been most everywhere on earth. Haven't you, Mr. Piper?"

Mr. Piper smiled, his flashing, brilliant smile.

"Oh, perhaps I shouldn't say *that* exactly," he laughed.

Mr. King gazed back at him over the edge of his soup-spoon out of very round, very innocent blue eyes.

"Say what you like," he invited. "Right now I'm so hungry that I'd believe anything."

Mr. Allyn Piper stopped laughing. It seemed, just for a moment, as if he and Mr. King were not going to like each other very well. Then Mr. Piper went on again with what he had been saying when the interruption occurred.

After dinner, at Mrs. Lyman's suggestion, the party moved into the parlor to listen further to the revelations of Mr. Piper. The parlor was a stiff, respectable room, with dark red hangings which were supposed to look cheerful, but which in reality had somewhat the air of a bunch of red carnations at a funeral. It was furnished

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with a great many not very comfortable chairs, and at one end a large table for the magazines. Every one at Mrs. Lyman's subscribed for two magazines a year for the general good.

"Now you sit down here on the divan, Miss Ames," said Mrs. Lyman, "and Mr. Piper can sit beside you where we can all see him."

She glanced over her shoulder at Miss Webster and Miss Laura Pennell as she spoke, to see if they had taken note of this clever strategic movement. Miss Laura giggled a little, and fussed self-consciously with the pins in her hair, but Miss Webster would not for anything have betrayed the satisfaction that she felt.

"We'll sit here," she said, and drew up three chairs in a line just opposite—one for herself, one for Laura, one for Mrs. Lyman.

Elizabeth, bouncing irrepressibly up and down among the pillows, dimpled with suppressed glee.

"I guess you can all see from there," she said.

Then she looked at Mr. Allyn Piper, and they both laughed. Mr. Piper, Elizabeth discovered, had a perfectly delightful sense of humor, and already they understood one another very well.

Mr. King hesitated for a moment on the threshold.

"Shall I disturb you if I come in and read?" he asked.

A little wave of annoyance swept the group. Miss Webster straightened. Only Elizabeth Ames seemed not to mind.

"Of course not," she said. "Why don't you come over here and listen to Mr. Piper?"

Mr. King looked gravely at Elizabeth Ames, and at Mr. Piper already making arrangements to occupy the middle seat if there were to be three on the divan.

"Thank you," he said. "Don't move. I guess I can hear anyway."

And he sat down in the rocking chair at the end of the magazine table. It was rather a special rocking chair, and squeaked unless properly used, but Mr. King knew how to manage it.

Mr. King picked up the *Universal Magazine* and turned to Dunstan Murray's new serial, "Moth Wings and Candle Light," which Miss Laura Pennell had recommended. Mr. King also read much of the current fiction. Now and then he looked at the little group round the divan over the top of his magazine; at Elizabeth, vivid in coloring and manner, among the dark cushions; at Mr. Piper with his quick smile and easy speech; at the prim observant row opposite.

Mr. King had been a great disappointment at Mrs. Lyman's. He had come, of course, irreproachably recommended, and yet he had proved somehow not all that he should have been; Miss Laura, who was not above reading an occasional detective story, if the victim were killed in some quite nice way, had suggested tentatively once that perhaps his references were forged. Mr. King had never actually been seen to take up his soup from the wrong side of his plate—the trouble was deeper rooted than that. Miss Webster and Miss Laura had talked it over and decided that he had something in his past to hide—a plumber, perhaps, or a butcher, in his ancestry. He admitted openly that John Barton King was no relative of his, and that he had almost never heard of Mr. and Mrs. Pinkham King, who spent their summers at Newport and got their pictures in the papers.

THE most suspicious thing about Mr. King was that he was so unnecessarily reticent. He did not vouchsafe information about himself; he did not invite questions. When questions were asked he answered them pleasantly and frankly, but afterward the questioner was likely to discover that he had really told nothing. Miss Webster still burned at the recollection of one encounter.

It had been at dinner, during the second week.

"Who are your people?" Miss Webster had begun.

"I haven't any," said Mr. King. "My father and mother are both dead."

"Oh!" murmured Miss Webster perfunctorily. "That's too bad. I don't suppose your father was Mr. Egerton King of Philadelphia?"

"No," said Mr. King.

"Oh!" said Miss Webster again. "Then perhaps——"

Mr. King looked up at Miss Webster with the air of one who is about to reveal all.

"I come," he said, "of poor but honest parents. My father's name was B. L. King.

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He and my mother spent a great deal of time in New York."

"Indeed! And would it be too great an impertinence to ask what he did?" Miss Webster went on.

Miss Webster was not curious, but no man ought to be ashamed to talk about his family.

"Father?" said Mr. King slowly. "Why, I —I suppose you'd call father a business man."

Miss Webster trembled on the verge of discovery. She leaned forward ever so slightly and lowered her voice.

"And what," she asked, "should *you* call him?"

"Oh, I?" said Mr. King. "Why, I suppose I'd call him a business man too. You see, in a way, he was a business man."

Mr. King hesitated for an instant. Then he made about himself the first voluntary statement in two weeks.

"I was always more like mother, though," he said. "She was very quiet."

He turned on Miss Webster a look of frank straightforwardness impossible to associate with guile, but Miss Webster straightened as if she had suddenly found and swallowed the sword concealed in the evening spinach.

It was at this point that Elizabeth Ames had done the one unladylike thing of her life at Mrs. Lyman's. She had choked and been obliged to leave the table.

Mr. King had a rather round serious face, intensified by the roundness and seriousness of his blue eyes. He was very fair. Nevertheless his face was pleasantly browned, as if from a summer out of doors, and its very brown emphasized the blondness of the shock of hair that rose from his forehead. He was not a handsome man, but he was relieved of the necessity for being handsome by the niceness of his smile.

Elizabeth Ames, sitting in the corner of the divan beside Mr. Allyn Piper, was not at all unconscious of the difference between the two men. And she knew perfectly that Mr. King was watching her over the top of "Moth Wings and Candle Light."

Elizabeth Ames did not like Mr. King. She was not interested in him. But no one can help noticing a man who says so little and looks so much.

There was no possible doubt that Mr. Piper had a great many interesting things to talk about, and that he knew how to talk about them to advantage. He was an anthropologist specializing in the African field, and had made two stays of six months each with the Yao of Nyassaland. He was making a comparative study of Chitigau all over the world and had been to Spain, Persia, Norway, and Iceland to investigate possible clues. During his college course he had been on a summer field trip to Arizona and the Great Southwest, and since then he had spent almost an entire year there among the cliff dwellings. He had taken a two months' cruise among the South Sea Islands. During the war he had been in France for eleven months as an ambulance driver, and had seen all the worst of the fighting. It seemed almost incredible that so young a man could have done so much.

MR. PIPER spoke brilliantly. Elizabeth's color came and went in her excitement as he described the gaudy coloring of the buttes and mesas of Arizona; the Shiré highlands of Nyassaland, and the time when he had witnessed the Salapa dance among the Yao; the Allied advance round Vierzy in 1918; the five-day festival of Tebureimoa. He said that the beautiful native girls with lotus blossoms in their hair who danced in the moonlight on the shores of Tahiti were no dream of fiction because he had seen them with his own eyes. He said that he had taken natural mummies out of the caves of New Mexico that still had sandals on their feet after a thousand years. He said that the study of the Chitigau was fascinating. He meant to give his life to a thorough investigation of the subject.

Miss Webster said that she liked to see young people who were interested in doing some kind of serious creative work.

Mr. Allyn Piper made a deprecating movement of slim, sensitive fingers.

"Oh, of course," he said, "I may not prove a thing, really. But in my own mind there is no doubt that there is a basic similarity in line form between the Chitigau of the American Indians of the Southwest and of the Yao of Nyassaland which points to the possibility of a common origin. If—*if*, I say, such a thing could be satisfactorily proved, it would revolutionize science."

"Squeak," said Mr. King's rocking chair suddenly.

Mr. Allyn Piper, lest he might seem boastful, changed the subject.

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"I wish I could show you the Black Mesa above Mayence at daybreak," he said.

He spoke in general terms, but his glance included only Elizabeth.

Elizabeth clasped her hands together in unaffected delight.

"Oh-h!" she said. "I'd love to see it!"

"There'd be more colors than any one ever imagined," Mr. Piper went on, "and Pinnacle Rock in the distance— It was just the other side of Pinnacle that I took out the arthritic skeleton that's here in the Claymore Museum now. Sometime I'd like to take you down and show it to you."

"Squeak," said Mr. King's chair.

Half an hour later a nudge was passed from elbow to elbow down the line facing the divan, and Miss Webster, Mrs. Lyman, and Miss Laura Pennell rose simultaneously. It was plain that Mr. Allyn Piper was to be given a free hand with Elizabeth.

"We'll have to go now," said Miss Webster.

"M-hm," Mrs. Lyman agreed. "Ye-us."

She moved slowly toward the door, and as she moved she fixed on Mr. King over her shoulder a glance that said more plainly than words that if he had any tact at all he would join her.

Mr. King apparently had no tact. He looked at Mrs. Lyman blandly over the top of his magazine, and his chair squeaked.

It was, after all, Elizabeth Ames who followed the three ladies from the room. She said that she had some letters to write, and just simply must go. Mr. Allyn Piper went, too. And presently Mr. King was left alone with "Moth Wings and Candle Light."

THE next night Elizabeth Ames was out for dinner. At nine o'clock, however, it happened that Elizabeth coming down to mail a letter, and Mr. King coming down to see if the new *National* had been delivered, met in the front parlor.

"Hello," said Mr. King.

He smiled his wide friendly smile, and lingered as if for conversation.

"Hello," said Elizabeth.

Mr. King held out his hand for her letter.

"Let me," he said, and slipped it into his pocket as if a little later would do quite as well for mailing it.

At precisely that instant, the door leading from Mr. Allyn Piper's room into the hall was opened and Mr. Piper came out. The folding doors which connected the front and back parlors—now locked and chastely concealed by red curtains—had a wide crack between them through which sounds were easily heard.

Mr. Allyn Piper did not exactly come running, but he came with utter promptness. He was plainly glad to see Elizabeth again, and indifferent to the continued presence of Mr. King.

"We missed you at dinner," he said.

"Thank you," said Elizabeth demurely.

She was standing, leaning back against the table, with her hands outstretched against its edge, and neither of the men was unaware of her loveliness. She was wearing a dinner dress of clinging gray, and its complete simplicity suited the fly-away splendor of her hair.

Mr. Allyn Piper looked suggestively in the direction of the divan where they had sat the night before.

"Shall we?" he asked.

"All right," said Elizabeth.

She crossed the room suddenly, as she did everything, in a little swirl of graceful floating gray.

Mr. King's progress was in no way remarkable save for its efficiency. Mr. Piper, arriving just behind Elizabeth Ames, found Mr. King already there. Elizabeth sat between them.

Mr. Piper looked at Mr. King without cordiality.

"Have you plenty of room?" he asked Elizabeth, not very subtly.

Elizabeth looked up at him, and unbridled mischief flashed in her dark eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Piper!" she said. "Am I crowding you? I'm *so* sorry."

And she moved over a little in the direction of Mr. King. Mr. Piper's sensitive face flushed hotly.

"Oh, Miss Ames!" he protested. "You know——"

Elizabeth laughed.

"Yes," she said. "I know a lot more than you'd think, just to look at me!"

The same thing, perhaps, might have been said of Mr. King.

Mr. King, however, made no direct effort to join in the conversation. He seemed content to accept his rôle as an outsider, and a comfortable seat on Miss Ames's very immediate left.

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"We all liked your stories last night very much," said Elizabeth politely, doing penance.

Mr. Piper's face cleared.

"Did you enjoy it?" he said. "I'm glad you like to hear me talk as well as I like to do it. It's a funny thing, though, I remembered afterward that I never told you a word about the time when we were caught in a freshet when we were crossing Roaring Creek. Of course you've heard of brooks that grew into rivers in the night, but this one did it all in a minute, and we were in the middle of the ford. It carried all our wagons downstream, and I was half drowned."

"Oh-h-h!" breathed Elizabeth. "How exciting!"

"It's a terrible sensation, though, to feel the water closing over your head." He turned to the silent Mr. King. "You can imagine what it would be like."

"Yes," said Mr. King.

"I don't suppose you've gone in much for the dangers of the camp and trail?"

"No," said Mr. King.

"Ever traveled much in Arizona?"

"No," said Mr. King.

"Don't you ever regret having lived in one place so much?"

"No," said Mr. King.

Mr. Piper smiled with a rather studied kindliness.

"Rather an office sort of man, I take it," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. King.

For just an instant Mr. Piper looked at him with the merest shade of suspicion, but Mr. King's innocence was too obvious to cause alarm.

"Well—it's certainly nice to be satisfied," Mr. Piper said.

Then he was swept away again on the flood of his own reminiscences. He repeated his statement of the night before that the Chitigau was fascinating.

"You know I've had some of the most amazing experiences," he said, "following the Chitigau round the world. If I could only write, now, I'd do an account of it all, and call it 'The Trail of the Chitigau' or something like that. That's a bang-up good title, now, isn't it—'The Trail of the Chitigau'?"

"Yes," said Mr. King.

"Wonderful," said Elizabeth.

Then she laid her fingers lightly on Mr. Piper's coat sleeve and checked him as he was going on.

"I hate to seem stupid," she said, "but I'm afraid I don't really understand what a Chitigau is."

MR. ALLYN PIPER was naturally surprised.

"You don't?" he said. "Why, it's a string figure. The word itself is from the Yao language and means spider's web. I use it—and am recommending that other scientists follow my example—in a universal sense as applying to similar figures all over the world. If I had a piece of string, I could show you——"

Mr. King produced one from a rather boyishly well-filled pocket, and Mr. Piper took it eagerly. His clever fingers twisted the strands with almost incredible swiftness; then he held out, stretched between his hands, a complicated geometrical figure.

"Oh," said Mr. King. "Cat's cradle."

"Well—yes," said Mr. Piper. "Of course that is the nearest modern equivalent. It's an ancient form, naturally, of great importance."

Elizabeth held out her hand for the string.

"Let me try," she said.

Mr. Allyn Piper placed the string in the proper position on her fingers, and taking hold of her wrists, guided her through the complicated movements. Elizabeth had firm, capable-looking hands, and yet hands that were small and soft and utterly feminine. The silver wrist watch on its narrow gray ribbon emphasized the precision and grace of every motion.

When she had finished, Mr. King held out his hands too.

"Now teach me, Miss Ames," he said.

And Elizabeth obligingly took him by his wrists and taught him all she knew.

Mr. King, however, was not quick at cat's cradle, and Mr. Piper presently grew restless.

"Of course," he said, "that's only one of thousands of designs."

He recaptured the string, and dazzled them by the multiplicity of his accomplishments.

"The Chitigau differs more or less," he told them, "both geographically and chronologically."

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He broke off.

"I'll tell you what," he said. "You ask me questions, and then I'll be sure that I'm telling you the things that you want to know."

"All right," said Elizabeth.

Then she struck her hands suddenly together with the quick characteristic gesture that accompanied a new idea.

"Oh, I know!" she cried. "Let's take turns asking questions. First you and Mr. King can ask me questions, and then I'll ask you and Mr. King questions, and then——"

"Well," agreed Mr. Piper doubtfully. "I'll begin. What are your chief interests—scientific—or——"

"Personal," said Elizabeth promptly.

"Are you fond of science?" asked Mr. Piper.

"Some kinds," said Elizabeth. "Now you ask something, Mr. King. You missed your turn; you'll have to ask two."

Mr. King raised grave blue eyes.

"Are you fond of pets?" he asked.

"Some kinds," Elizabeth repeated.

"What kinds of pets have you had?"

Elizabeth checked them on her fingers.

"Horses," she said, "cows, sheep, cats, dogs——"

Mr. Piper had brightened at the mention of horses.

"Saddle or driving horses?" he asked.

"Saddle."

"Describe your favorite horse."

Elizabeth obeyed.

"He kicked," she said.

"Describe your favorite cow," said Mr. King promptly.

"She hooked," said Elizabeth.

Mr. King looked at Elizabeth Ames and suddenly he grinned, widely, irrepressibly, delightfully. Elizabeth laughed aloud.

Then she followed suit.

"What is your favorite bird?" she asked Mr. Piper.

Mr. Piper's face was rather red.

"Goose," he jerked out with a meaning more obvious than delicate.

"Mine's turkey on Thanksgiving," said Elizabeth. "What's yours, Mr. King?"

"Sandpipers," murmured Mr. King. "Along about October I like to shoot them."

Mr. Allyn Piper straightened in his seat.

"I guess it's my turn to ask Mr. King some questions," he said. "Do you hunt much, Mr. King?"

"No," said Mr. King.

"Do you know how to shoot?"

"A little," said Mr. King.

"What gun do you use?"

"Machine guns," said Mr. King.

Elizabeth thrilled with excitement.

"Oh, Mr. King!" she cried. "You were in the war too!"

Mr. King joined Mr. Piper in looking rather red and uncomfortable.

"Well—yes," he admitted.

"How long were you in?" Elizabeth demanded. "What branch?"

Mr. King looked even more uncomfortable.

"Oh—I don't know—about four years, I guess. Aviation. French Escadrille before America came in," he said.

Elizabeth leaned forward, her eyes shining with excitement.

"How perfectly splendid!" she said. "Why didn't you ever tell me about it?"

Mr. King shuffled his feet on Mrs. Lyman's dark red art square.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "There wasn't anything very interesting to tell about."

"Goodness!" said Elizabeth. "I should think there would be. Shouldn't you, Mr. Piper?"

"Uh," said Mr. Piper.

"Mr. Piper," said Elizabeth, "was only in the war eleven months, and he told me lots of interesting things about it last night. Didn't you, Mr. Piper?"

"Uh," said Mr. Piper.

There was a brief silence.

Then Mr. Piper suddenly brightened.

"You know," he said, "there was one mighty interesting thing that happened toward the end. I was at Laon when they brought in a bunch of German prisoners. One of them had shell shock and wouldn't do a thing but sit and twist his fingers. When I saw him I gave him a piece of string just to see what he would do with it. And if you'll believe it, he twisted it up into a figure—of course it was different in lots of ways—but in its basic outlines it was strongly suggestive of a Middle Period Adamanese Chitigau. . . ."

IT WAS quite by accident that Elizabeth Ames and Mr. King met the next night in the front parlor. Elizabeth had just come in to see if she had left her gloves

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there. Mr. King had just come in. He smiled at Elizabeth, and the smile revealed pleasant humorous lines about his mouth and an unsuspected twinkle in the grave blue eyes.

"Hello," he greeted her, just as he had the night before.

"Hello," said Elizabeth back again. "I've lost my gloves."

"Are you going out?" asked Mr. King.

"No," said Elizabeth.

For some reason this brief conversation seemed to them amusing, and they both laughed. And then abruptly they both stopped—listened. Mr. Allyn Piper's door had opened, and Mr. Allyn Piper's step sounded in the hall.

Mr. King was close at Elizabeth's side in two long strides.

"Let's go out on the piazza," he whispered. "Will you? I couldn't stand playing cat's cradle again tonight."

His smile was irresistible; and Elizabeth, greatly to her own surprise, heard herself saying that she would.

ON THE threshold they met Mr. Piper, not exactly running, but coming promptly. There was a look of expectation on his face, a suggestion, too, of certainty in his welcome. He stopped abruptly.

"Good evening," he said. Then, "Oh—you're going."

"Good evening," said Elizabeth.

"Yes," said Mr. King. "We're going."

And somehow the door had opened and closed between them. Outside soft June air stirred the decorous vines round Mrs. Lyman's porch. The porch chairs were uncomfortable, but even discomfort could not spoil the last of the June sunset that showed through an open space between the houses opposite.

For a while they were rather silent; they spoke in a desultory way of the day's newspaper gossip.

"What do you do?" Mr. King asked suddenly. "Are you a secretary?"

"Yes," said Elizabeth. "Mr. Hammerford's."

"You know, that isn't good enough for you," said Mr. King. "A person like you ought to be doing something different."

Elizabeth Ames was half annoyed, half amused. She thought this a strange, abrupt, young man, who did not like to talk about himself, and yet tried to interfere in affairs distinctly not his own. She opened her lips to say something which should discourage him at the beginning, but Mr. King did not wait for her to say it. It was a way that he had.

"WHAT I mean," he said, "is that you ought to do something more original—creative. You could, you know. I don't believe you're a wonderful secretary—just a good one. Lots of people can be good secretaries. You ought to do something that nobody can do but you."

"Yes," murmured Elizabeth. "Easy. Discover the fourth dimension."

She did not want to be pleased, but she could not help being interested. No one could, because Mr. King so obviously meant exactly what he said. There was utter seriousness in the straightforward look of his blue eyes, in the little emphatic gesture with which he now and then ended his sentences.

"Don't you know a lot about it?" she teased.

Mr. King smiled again.

"You're making fun of me," he said, "and I don't blame you. But I know more about it than you think. I notice people more than you think. It's—it's a habit of mine."

Elizabeth laughed a little shakily.

"And out of your wisdom and experience," she said, "what should you suggest?"

Mr. King was embarrassed, but he was not a man to give up easily.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "That's for you to say. You could be—a lady detective, or a diplomat's wife, or the heroine of the Great American Novel, or—or anything you wanted to be."

"That shows how little you know about it," said Elizabeth.

"It shows how little *you* know about it," Mr. King contradicted her—and smiled.

Afterward Elizabeth was shocked at the intimacy of their conversation; she did not see how she had ever let it happen. It was, obviously, Mr. King's fault.

During the summer Elizabeth Ames saw Mr. King perhaps one evening a week. She saw Mr. Piper, on an average, four evenings a week. On the other two evenings she was out. Mr. Piper took her about a great deal, but Mr. King never asked

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her to go anywhere with him. He was working very hard at the office, he said. Mr. Piper said that he was working hard too, at the Claymore Museum, where he was supervising the arrangement of the Chitigau Room. The most fascinating things were always happening to him there —he used to tell Elizabeth about them every evening. Mr. King did not talk about himself much. He seemed, oddly enough, to prefer to talk about Elizabeth Ames.

Miss Webster and Miss Laura Pennell were excellently well pleased with the way things were going. They used to whisper their surmises to Mrs. Lyman whenever they met, and Mrs. Lyman quite agreed with them.

"M-hm," she would say. "Ye-us."

AND then in September three things happened all at once.

The first thing happened on Sunday, the sixth, at a quarter past ten; Miss Webster could have told you the exact minute. Sunday morning breakfast was over, and it still lacked five minutes of time to start for church. It is regrettable to have to record, however, that Miss Webster and Miss Laura Pennell missed church that morning for the first time in seventeen years.

At a quarter past ten, Miss Laura Pennell in the black silk with the white collar, and Miss Webster in the black silk, were sitting by the front window in Miss Webster's room watching the passing of the ungodly who were not going to church when a car swept up in front of Mrs. Lyman's door.

It was no ordinary car; so much they could see by even the most genteel Sabbath day craning of their necks round the casing. There was an air about it at once dignified and ostentatious. In color it was dark blue—later, indeed, there was argument as to whether it was not, after all, black. A similar discussion attached to the matter of whether the mountings were silver or only nickel. Miss Laura Pennell, usually so meek in matters of disagreement with Miss Webster, squared her shoulders and said that if those fittings were not sterling silver she had never seen any on any car.

As soon as the car stopped, a negro chauffeur in dark blue (or black) livery with silver buttons climbed down from the outside seat and opened the door. He spoke briefly with the person, or personage, inside and came up to Mrs. Lyman's door. An instant later, Mrs. Lyman, for the first time in history, was heard running up the stairs.

Miss Webster rose quietly and opened the door of her room about three inches. She did this to see if Mrs. Lyman was coming up to look for her. She was not; she was coming up to look for Mr. King. Nevertheless, Miss Webster left the door slightly open. She was not curious, but she hated a mystery.

"Mr. King," called Mrs. Lyman. "Are you here? Mr. King!"

Mr. King came out and joined her, and they went down together.

The chauffeur meantime had returned to the car at the curb, and held the door while the man within stepped down. He was, as the ladies in the second floor front had suspected, not a person, but a personage. He was tall and very straight, with gray hair round a keen, but not unpleasant, face. He had the air of one to whom success has become habitual.

A few steps carried him out of sight. There was the distant sound of greeting at the front door, then steps on the stairs, and Mr. King and his guest passed with unnecessary briskness through the upper hall, and disappeared.

So swiftly had these events taken place that it was still only twenty minutes past ten when the two men entered Mr. King's room. From within their voices could be heard plainly, but no words could be distinguished. At five minutes to eleven they came out again and went downstairs. The chauffeur held open the door; they both stepped in; the car drove away.

Miss Webster sank back in her chair and fanned herself with the black satin fan which she always carried to church.

"Heavens to Betsy!" she said.

This, in Miss Webster's vocabulary was equivalent to swearing, and indicated the utmost perturbation of mind.

"Did you see that, Laura? *Mr. King went with him.*"

Miss Laura had seen that very thing and admitted it frankly. Following Miss Webster's example, she too leaned back and fanned herself with a copy of the *Universal Magazine* which lay beside her on the table. Miss Laura would not for anything have looked inside the covers of the *Universal Magazine* on the Lord's Day, but it did not seem wrong to use it for a fan.

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"You know," said Miss Webster, "that *was* somebody."

"Oh, *yes*," Miss Laura agreed.

"Somebody special, I mean," Miss Webster went on. "He made me think of some picture I've seen, but I can't think whose."

There was a brief silence. Then, presently, Miss Webster rose.

"I guess I'll go downstairs a minute," she said, "and speak to Mrs. Lyman. She said she found a handkerchief yesterday, and wanted me to see if it was mine."

Miss Laura Pennell started to speak several times and didn't. But when Miss Webster had started down the stairs, she fluttered across the room and stuck her head out into the hall.

"Oh, Abigail!" she called. "Abigail! If you should happen to think of it while you're there, you might ask Mrs. Lyman what that man's name was."

"Well—all right," said Miss Webster. "I will."

Miss Laura Pennell fluttered uncertainly back to her chair, then turned again with an apologetic resolution, and hurried out.

"Oh, Abigail!" she called. "Wait a minute. I guess I'll come too."

THE man's name was Mr. Hetherton. Miss Webster and Miss Laura Pennell hurried back upstairs as fast as their excitement would let them, and Miss Webster took down the well-worn copy of *Famous People* and whirled through the H's. She found Hetherton—Wakefield Irving Hetherton. There was a brief account of his life and a picture. Wakefield Irving Hetherton, editor-in-chief of the *Universal Magazine*, was a tall straight man with graying hair and a look about him of continued prosperity.

Miss Webster laid a lean finger on the picture.

"It is he," she said.

Miss Webster and Miss Laura Pennell had a very busy day. They had to collect all available data in regard to Mr. Wakefield Irving Hetherton, and report additional discoveries as they were made to an interested Mrs. Lyman. At two o'clock when Mr. Piper came in, they had to repeat the details of the day up to that point. At four o'clock, when Elizabeth Ames came in, they had to repeat them again. They had to look often at the covers of recent issues of the *Universal Magazine;* they decided that it would not be wrong even to open them to page one, where the name of Wakefield Irving Hetherton appeared. And in particular they had to fly to the window at the sound of every passing automobile, to see if Mr. King were returning.

Along toward night Miss Webster remarked openly that after all she had always thought that there was something rather likable about Mr. King in spite of his queer ways. Miss Laura upheld her cousin's statement, and added that she had often thought he might tell a good deal if he wanted to, and that she imagined that he knew awfully nice people.

"M-hm," said Mrs. Lyman. "Ye-us. I think that's so."

Mr. Piper said nothing.

Elizabeth Ames laughed.

Mr. King did not return until eight o'clock, and would have gone from the dark blue, or black, car directly to his room, if voices from the parlor had not called him back. They spoke to him after the manner of a chorus.

"Good evening," they said.

Then Miss Webster's voice detached itself from the others.

"Did you have a pleasant day with Mr. Hetherton of the *Universal Magazine?*" she asked.

She was herself not unaware that her question was a masterpiece.

"Yes," said Mr. King, pleasantly but not loquaciously.

"Business or pleasure?" Miss Webster asked again.

"Oh—both," said Mr. King. "We did our business while we golfed."

Then he went on up the stairs.

Miss Webster straightened herself a little in her chair, and said that she didn't see why he needed to be so close-mouthed about it. She added, however, that after all she supposed it was better to be too modest than to be always talking about yourself.

Elizabeth Ames laughed again.

The second event took place, so far as any definite time can be assigned to it, on Thursday, the tenth, at three-thirty, when the postman dropped the current issue of the *Universal Magazine* through the slide in Mrs. Lyman's front door. Mrs. Lyman picked it up and laid it on the table in the

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living-room; to her undying regret she did not look at it.

Miss Laura Pennell naturally made the discovery—Miss Laura who read the magazines. She had heard the thump of something coming through the letter slide, had known it was the day for the *Universal*, and hurried down to get the next chapter of Richard Dean Frothingham's serial, "The Other Side of Main Street." Five minutes afterward she gave a little shriek; Miss Laura Pennell had never before made so loud and so sudden a noise. Miss Webster, from upstairs, came running. Mrs. Lyman came running. Even Annie, the maid, under the impression that Miss Laura was having another of her spells, came running with the bottle of aromatic.

Miss Laura was lying back in one corner of the divan making little feeble gestures with the *Universal Magazine*.

No, she said, she was not ill.

No, she did not want the aromatic.

"Look," she gasped, and held out the magazine again.

They looked. Across the top of the first page, the title of the issue's leading story stood out in large bold type:

THE TRAIL OF THE CHITIGAU

Below it in letters only a trifle smaller appeared the name of the author:

John Barton King

Even then, just for a moment, they did not understand; indeed, it was the illustrations which first revealed to them the full enormity of the truth. There were three pictures. The first showed a girl and a man with a small mustache sitting side by side on a divan, with three perfect ladies in three straight-backed chairs facing them, and in the background a young man alone reading a magazine. The second showed the girl and two men sitting on the same divan. One of the men was bending forward toward the girl and making a kind of pattern with a piece of string. The third was a close-up of a man and a girl. It was not the man with the small mustache; he was taller and broader shouldered, with a round, serious, pleasant face. The girl was very lovely, with fly-away hair and dimples.

Miss Webster laid an accusing forefinger on the name of the author.

"King," she said. "*King.*"

At that instant it was perhaps as well for Mr. King that he was at his office in town, where he did his writing.

DURING the day "The Trail of the Chitigau" was read an almost unbelievable number of times at Mrs. Lyman's. They were all there done to the life—humorously, and yet sympathetically, too—Miss Webster, her own ramroddy curious self, and yet obviously a born leader; Miss Laura Pennell, who read the magazines—rather sweet for all her fluttering and apology; Mrs. Lyman with her Southern accent from the West; Mr. Allyn Piper and his cat's cradles; and the hero; and the heroine.

At first every one was rather angry. They had been imposed upon; a scurvy trick had been played; they had been taken unawares—like having a picture snapped when they were not looking. Toward noon, however, a little change in the temper of the company began to take place. They began to feel less and less that they had been made ridiculous, and more and more that they had been made famous.

Miss Webster definitely sounded the new note at two o'clock when she said that after all there was no denying that Mr. King was *bright*, and that any one could see with half an eye that he was heels over head in love with Elizabeth Ames.

A half hour later the climax was reached.

"Do you think she's in love with him?" Miss Laura half whispered.

Miss Webster sat up very straight indeed. She spoke as one who has authority.

"I don't know," she said. "But *my* opinion has always been that she couldn't do better."

"M-hm," agreed Mrs. Lyman placidly. "Ye-us."

Miss Laura fluttered. Here was she, for sixty years a reader of fiction, now herself involved in a first-hand romance.

Before night it had been definitely decided that Mr. King was supremely clever.

Elizabeth came home at half-past five, and was met at the door by Miss Webster, Miss Laura Pennell, Mrs. Lyman, and the *Universal Magazine*. She was dragged almost by force into the parlor and made to read it on the spot, while the others sat in various points of vantage round the room

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and watched her expression as she read. At first she looked rather amused—once or twice she laughed; then she looked angry; finally an odd expression that no one could rightly interpret took the place of anger; only, as she neared the end, the bright color mounted and mounted in her face until it blazed there crimson when she finished and laid the magazine aside.

Elizabeth stood up.

"What did you think of it?" demanded Miss Webster.

"He's clever, isn't he?" Elizabeth replied ambiguously.

It was just then that Mr. Allyn Piper came in and was met in his turn by the delegation at the front door. Mr. Piper looked hot, as if he had been hurrying.

Miss Webster held out the *Universal Magazine*—waved it, indeed, before Mr. Piper's eyes.

"Have you seen it?" she asked.

"Uh," said Mr. Piper.

He continued down the hall toward his own room. Miss Webster followed.

"What did you say?" she asked again.

"Uh," repeated Mr. Piper.

"Because," Miss Webster went on, "if you *haven't* seen it, you can borrow this. I've got another copy."

Mr. Piper faced about with his hand on the doorknob of the back parlor; even the short walk from the front door of his own room had seemed to make him hotter-looking than he was before.

"The Devil you have!" said Mr. Piper loudly, and flung himself inside and slammed the door.

The little group in the hall stood rigid, frozen where it was with honest horror; a thing like that had never happened before at Mrs. Lyman's. Mrs. Lyman herself speculated vaguely as to whether she could get Mr. Piper out without really asking him to leave.

And then Elizabeth Ames laughed.

Strangely enough no one heard Mr. King come in at all. He came, by intention, inconspicuously, and crept up to his room on tiptoe. He did not come down to dinner. The fact is, he was busy packing.

It was Miss Laura Pennell who discovered the light under his door and knew that he had returned. She did not mention her discovery to any one, however, and presently, when the chance offered, she did an outrageous thing. Miss Laura walked up and knocked at a man's bedroom door.

Mr. King opened it.

"Good—good evening," stammered Miss Laura. She twisted her fingers together in an agony of embarrassment and apprehension, beginning already to edge away. "I—I just wanted to tell you how—how wonderful I thought your story was. I always wanted," she ended in a little rush, "to know an author."

From his superior height Mr. King smiled down at her—delightfully.

"That's mighty nice of you," he said. "You see—I rather thought—you might want to put me out."

"I don't," Miss Laura repeated. "I always wanted to know an author."

And then suddenly she came quite close to him and stood on tiptoe, and whispered.

"Miss Ames is going out by and by," she said, "but she hasn't started yet."

And then she whirled away from him and ran—literally ran—down the hall and into her own room and out of sight.

JOHN KING stood in his open doorway and stared after her thoughtfully. For a few moments he hesitated. Then he stepped quickly across the hall and knocked.

Elizabeth Ames opened the door. She was wearing a dark blue dress with a bright scarf, and there was a kind of gypsy quality in her beauty as she stood poised there on the threshold, her arms lifted a little against the casing.

"You've read my story," said John King.

"Yes," said Elizabeth.

Her expression to him, as it had been to the others, was utterly baffling. He was a little frightened by it, but he was not a man to give up without trying. He smiled at her—the wide irresistible smile that had always brought John King the things he wanted. But this time there was something in his smile, and in the look which he bent on Elizabeth Ames, that no one had ever seen there before.

"And in spite of that," he asked, "will you go to walk with me? It's"—he hesitated, then flung it out boyishly—"it's great down by the river."

Elizabeth Ames hesitated too for just an instant. Then she smiled back again at John King.

"Yes," she said. "I'll go."

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Love—and Mystery—and the Racers

THOROUGHBRED

Joybells Wins a Wild Race—Beachey Starts a Fire Under Gabriel—Jeffries Is Vindicated—Constance Comes into Her Own

By Mrs. Wilson Woodrow

Author of "Swallowed Up"

Illustration by O. F. Schmidt

Begin this serial at any time. The story is here up to this instalment.

OTHER EVENTS in her life might grow dim, Constance Lee felt, and merge into mere background shadows on the stage of memory. But that moment when the vicious crack of an assassin's rifle rang out from the shrubbery, and Clay Jeffries staggering from her side fell to the graveled drive in front of his old Kentucky manor house at Beechlands, would always remain as clear and sharp in every detail as if picked out by a powerful, white spotlight.

She had come there with her New York attorney, Louis Beachey, to offer Jeffries their aid in righting the injustice done in ruling him off the turf for the substitution of a "ringer" in the place of his colt, Sleighbells, in the great Wideawake Stakes at Latonia. This racing swindle, a country-wide sensation in view of Jeffries's social and political prominence—he was perhaps America's best-known gentleman sportsman—had in reality been engineered by a crooked trainer named DeVries, with the backing of Perry Gabriel, a rich and unscrupulous young Easterner.

Gabriel and DeVries had won more than a million dollars on the transaction; but, less through their planning than through a singular chain of coincidences, the responsibility had been inextricably fastened upon Judge Jeffries.

Constance Lee, though, knew the truth. She had been warned of the plot two days before the race; and, as DeVries was also her trainer, and the ringer to be used was a horse from her stable, had tried to prevent it. Against multiplied obstacles—Gabriel and DeVries had not hesitated to have a dam blown up to delay her progress—she had made a gallant dash down from the Kentucky mountains, but had arrived too late. And the information in her hands, although convincing to herself, was too sketchy and unsubstantial to serve as proof either against the swindlers or in aid of Jeffries.

Immediately she set herself to the task of obtaining real evidence, and learning that Jeffries had secluded himself in his Bluegrass home, she sent his cousin, Nannie Wendell, to tell him what she knew.

She had engaged John Bell, a private detective, to follow the tortuous trail of Gabriel and DeVries in covering up their tracks; and when Bell reported himself baffled, she appealed to Louis Beachey. Mountain-born himself, and fully recognizing the risk of playing the spy among the lawless and secretive mountaineers, nevertheless, for her sake Beachey went up into his native Cumberlands, and in three days returned with positive assurance as to the identity of the man who had blown up the

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dam, and excellent reasons to believe that through him the responsibility could be traced back to Gabriel.

It was Beachey's idea that, as between facing a long term in State's prison for the destruction of the dam, and merely admitting to a jockey club his part in the turf swindle, Gabriel would choose the lesser alternative. But before taking any steps in the matter, it seemed advisable to obtain Judge Jeffries's sanction, and therefore the lawyer and Constance had come down to Beechlands this June evening to consult him.

Leaving Beachey in the care of Nannie Wendell, Jeffries saw Constance alone in his library. The situation was strained enough to tickle the malicious fancy of a pagan god.

SIX months before, these two had met in Atlantic City, and Jeffries, in whose life women had hitherto meant little, had lost his heart. She was free, a widow, and he was convinced that his feeling for her was returned. Yet between them there was always a barrier, an elusive something that he could not understand.

He had come East on important business in connection with his claim to a valuable coal property which was in course of litigation. He had confided his plans to Mrs. Lee, and two days later found them unexpectedly balked. Simultaneously, she disappeared without a word of farewell to him, leaving no clue to indicate where she had gone.

He learned then that she was his real opponent in the contest over the coal lands; more, that she was sailing under false colors, that she was a graduate of a reform school, and suspected of being a blackmailer and an adventuress.

Yet he refused to believe that she had been merely playing upon his infatuation for her own advantage. A train of misfortunes followed him—financial reverses, political setbacks, all chargeable to her agents or associates—but still he refused to believe.

And then came the turf swindle, involving him through circumstances which seemed flagrantly of her contriving. He could no longer doubt, especially when she told him she had cherished a resentment against him for years as the judge who had unjustly committed her to the hard discipline of the reform school. So when she came now to offer help, he regarded it as only a specious scheme to hamstring his own efforts to secure his vindication.

He offered no reproaches in his talk with her, voiced no accusations; but he left no doubt as to his attitude. He made it plain that he would have no dealings with, nor accept any favors from her attorney, or any one acting for or in conjunction with her. He would not even discuss with her the evidence she had brought to lay before him. So, after trying in every way to alter his decision, she saw that it would be idle to continue the argument; she would have to go ahead in her own way, without reference to him.

Jeffries accompanied her and Beachey to the front door, where a taxicab waited to take them back to the station. But on the porch, Beachey stopped to answer some remark of Nannie Wendell's, and it was Jeffries who passed down the steps with Constance, and held open the cab door for her to enter.

Just as she took her seat inside, the rifle shot rang out from a clump of shrubbery at the corner of the house, and Jeffries fell.

For a second she sat motionless in the cab—only for a second, yet it seemed to her that centuries passed. Then her foot was on the step, and she leaped out. She was acutely conscious of every detail of the scene; it was etched in her brain as by some biting acid—the shadowy darkness of the lawn cut by the yellow path of light from the open hall door; the bent figure of an old negro butler inside, his dark face and protruding eyeballs; Nannie's shrill scream echoing in her ears.

She sprang to where Jeffries lay, and knelt beside him, gathering his head in her arms, murmuring wild, tender words, and then calling frantically for aid.

BUT of all that bewildered, frightened group, it was Beachey alone who grasped the significance of the attack. Almost with the crack of the rifle he had realized that the bullet was meant for him and not for Jeffries. They were of about the same height, and in the uncertain light—the night was cloudy, and there was

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no moon—the murderer had mistaken his target. And with this comprehension, his cool, trained brain instantly responded in action.

Pushing Nannie Wendell behind a pillar with his left hand, and at the same instant drawing the automatic revolver he had carried constantly since his return from the mountains, he ran crouching along the railing of the porch, and swung himself over at the end. For a second his form was visible, then he vanished in a pool of blackness. A moment later, his automatic spoke from the clump of shrubbery, to be immediately answered by another rifle-shot from behind a tree a little distance away. And after that, from time to time, there was a scattering exchange of fire as the two—pursued and pursuer—made their way across the grounds.

Nannie Wendell, without taking time to catch her breath after Beachey had roughly thrust her behind the pillar, ran down the steps to the drive.

"Clay?" she cried, gripping Constance by the shoulder. "Is he dead?"

Constance turned a ghastly face up to her. Her voice rang out broken and strident.

"Get help! Get help! Can't you see? Oh, my God! Hurry! Hurry!"

Nannie rushed back up the steps, calling to the frightened huddled servants, ordering them to come down.

The colored driver of the taxicab, who had sat braced back in his seat paralyzed with terror, slid cautiously to the ground, and flattened himself against the side of the car. He could hear an occasional shot; but as these seemed to recede farther and farther away from the house, his courage returned.

"We gotta git 'im inside," he said. "Heah, yo' niggers!"—to the butler and another man who had detached themselves from the milling group at the door and had ventured as far as the steps. "Come down yere, an' lend a hand."

Evidently a fellow of some executive ability, he instructed them to lift Jeffries as carefully as possible, and carry him into the house.

"Better phone fo' a doctor, ma'am," he said to Nannie, who was wringing her hands on the steps. "He's still breathin', but 'at's jes' about all."

It was Constance, though, who sprang ahead of Nannie and seized upon the distracted housekeeper.

"Get a doctor—the nearest one," she ordered tersely. "Then we will have to do what we can, until he comes."

She was whiter than marble as she came back to meet the men bringing Jeffries through the doorway. She signed to them to lay him down on a low, leather couch in the hall, but as she saw the blood welling up through his coat over his chest, the walls went black about her. She fought against the faintness that was overcoming her. There was no time for that; every moment counted.

"Bring cotton, bandages, antiseptics, water at once," she directed the housekeeper. "Give me your knife," she said to the cabdriver; and with it, cut away Jeffries's coat and shirt.

There was something to be done; that steadied her nerves. And he lived! He lived! Unconscious though he was, his face a leaden gray, his breath coming in awful gurgling gasps, he still lived!

She became again the girl who had mopped the blood from the floors of French hospitals, who had dressed terrible injuries and seen dreadful sights, insensible to everything but the duty of the moment. When with the help of the cabman she had cut away the clothing, and had sponged the blood from the black bullet-hole only a fraction of an inch away from the heart, she bandaged the wound in a way that would have drawn compliments from even a hospital surgeon.

That done, she could only kneel beside the couch and wait. That was the horror of it. She could do no more for him, simply wait and wipe the sweat from his face until the doctor came. She tried to pray; but her thoughts were too incoherent. The prayers merged into a fierce, continuous reiteration:

"He must live! He shall live!"

DURING that period of strain and apprehension while the anxious household waited for the coming of the doctor, no one had given a thought to Beachey; his absence was unnoticed.

And he, for his part, was giving as little thought to them. His mind, his energy, his subtlety, all his powers were bent solely on the chase. He was a hunter

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after that greatest quarry in the world, a man; and a quarry, in this instance, who was as wily, as resourceful, and even more vindictive than himself.

In a moment's space, he had sloughed off the habit of years as readily as a snake sloughs off its skin. Blood and tradition had asserted themselves, and he was again the primitive mountaineer, holding to the old law of vengeance: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

Following the bushwhacking methods of warfare with which he had grown familiar in his childhood, he slipped like a shadow from one patch of cover to another, or to the shelter of one of the faintly outlined cedars that dotted the lawn, firing whenever the dim shape of his adversary showed incautiously in the effort to escape.

From their exchange of shots, it did not take him long to decide that there was only one man opposed to him; and his object thereafter became to hold the fellow within a certain radius, and eventually to drive him into a corner and capture him. He had the advantage of a modern weapon, the other was armed with an old-fashioned rifle and after each shot had to pause and reload; but one or two extremely close calls convinced Beachey that the handicap was more than made up by a superior marksmanship.

In their maneuvering for position, they soon left the immediate vicinity of the house behind them. Through the interwoven branches of a mock-orange hedge which marked the confines of the yard, the murderer wriggled as silently as a lizard, turning to fire at a slight crackle of the twigs behind him where Beachey followed. The bullet whistled past the lawyer's ears as he ducked; but his quick return shot at the flash failed to find its mark.

Beyond the hedge lay a grove of stately trees, oaks, maples, black walnuts, but chiefly low-branching beeches. Beachey, still negotiating the twisted barrier of mock-orange bushes, saw his man dash suddenly to the nearest of these; but his pistol-arm was impeded for the moment. Before he could bring it into action, the fellow had gained shelter.

He changed his tactics, and retreating along the line of the hedge, reached with a similar dash another tree about thirty yards away.

HIS opponent, taken by surprise at the swift nimbleness of the exploit, spat a mouthful of tobacco juice at the foot of the tree behind which he was lurking, and swore under his breath.

A doubt which had been gathering in his brain gained certainty. His pursuer knew all the strategy of Indian fighting, and employed it with the skill of a mountaineer feudist. Who could it be? There was but one answer. That must have been another man who had fallen under his fire, and it was Beachey who so relentlessly stalked him.

Or, maybe, the old fox had played a trick on him, dropping at the report of his rifle, and then crawling swiftly to cover to take after him. But he couldn't quite believe that; he had drawn too sure a bead.

Whatever the explanation, though, this was certainly Beachey, and the conviction bred a sort of superstitious awe in him. He remembered that in the old days up in the hills, Lou Beachey had always bragged that he was invulnerable.

"Ain't no bullet made that kin git yuh, hey?" he muttered with stubborn, nettled fury. "By God, I'll show yuh!" And dodging back and forth from his refuge as he loaded and fired, he pumped a succession of shots at the oak which sheltered Beachey. A thin, sarcastic smile curved the lawyer's lips at this futile exhibition. He sensed the working of the other man's mind, and knew that rage would render him less wary.

And now, as he had expected, the character of the conflict altered. Instead of being a flight and pursuit there in the dense shadows of the grove, it changed to a duel—a battle of wits and trickery, with one man striving as hard as the other to land his antagonist as they circled each other and dodged from tree to tree.

But there was this difference: every shot from the rifle was aimed to kill, Beachey's bullets all ranged low as if his purpose were merely to disable. He was following up a definite plan, slowly but surely drawing his man into an angle at the farther end of the grove, where the trees ended and a broad strip of plowed land intervened between the fence and a corn-field beyond. But his adversary, intent only upon killing, did not realize this until he was fairly in the trap.

In the shelter of the last tree, the latter

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made a stand; but he knew the hopelessness of it. Every time he tried to stir from cover, Beachey's shots whizzed to the right or left of him, warning him to hold his ground.

But now the lawyer discovered that the clip of his automatic was exhausted. It was a moment of consternation. He had not a single shot left. For the first time in the encounter he spoke.

"Better come out and surrender," he called. One would have thought from his voice that he held complete control of the situation. "You can't get away across that open ground without my winging you. I can keep you where you are until others come and we are able to surround you, even if I have to wait for it until daylight."

The man behind the tree considered this.

"Ef I give in, be you-all aimin' to kill me?"

"YOU have nothing to fear, so far as I am concerned," Beachey answered. "Step out into the open, and be careful to keep your hands above your head."

After a little hesitation, the man obeyed, moving a pace or two away from the tree trunk, with the rifle in one of his upraised hands.

He saw Beachey's head rise from behind a log where he was crouching, a blob of blackness against the grayer blackness of the grove; and—quick as a flash his arm dropped, the rifle spoke in a perfectly aimed snap-shot, and he leaped back to the shelter of the tree.

Out of the tail of his eye as he sprang, he saw the uplifted head fall back; and with the echo of his shot, came a strangled cry. Then he heard a gurgling gasp or two, and a thrashing in the grass like that of a bear or deer in its death-flurry. Another moment, and all was quiet.

Even then he did not stir from his covert. It might be only a ruse to draw him into the open. He took off his battered slouch hat, and putting it on the end of his rifle, guardedly poked it out from behind the tree. But the decoy drew no sign of life from beyond the fallen log.

After another interval, he ventured a bolder move. Throwing himself flat on the ground, he wormed swiftly, cautiously over to the fence, flung himself between the rails, and lay on the other side, panting as if he had run a mile.

But still there came no shot from the log, no sound or movement. He gathered himself together, and crouching over, started to run, zigzagging across the furrows. He gained the edge of the cornfield, and dived in between the standing stalks.

The way to escape was open, and self-preservation urged him on; but something stronger held him back. He was sure now that Beachey wasn't just playing possum; he would never have allowed so plain a mark to cross that open strip without taking a shot. But he might be unconscious and wounded, but not mortally so; and that did not at all suit the killer's book. It was wiser to make sure of a finished job.

He crossed the plowed strip lower down, and began to circle back like a wolf through the trees, so as to approach the log from the rear.

But as he edged nearer, he saw that Beachey lay sprawled in a huddle, face down, his automatic about a foot away from one outflung hand. More confidently the killer stepped forward, his rifle in the crook of his arm, and bending over the motionless figure, started to turn it with his foot.

AT HIS touch, the dead body suddenly came to life. The barrel of his loosely held rifle was seized in a sinewy grip, and wrested from his hands; and as he was jerked forward, an upraised knee provided an obstacle over which he stumbled.

Before he could recover himself, Beachey was out from under him. He caught one upward glimpse of the clubbed rifle descending on his crown; then knew no more. When he came to, he found himself tied with stout withes of wild grapevine to a tree, his hands and feet securely tethered. Beachey sat on a log a few feet away, calmly smoking, the rifle across his knees.

"Howdy, Bud Fordney!" he gave a mountain greeting, as the prisoner groaned and opened his eyes. "If your head's clear enough after that little rap you got, I want to have a talk with you. I am surprised, Bud"—he shook his head reprovingly—"that an old bushwhacker like you should bite on so threadbare a trick as my poking my hat instead of my head up from the log. I only tried it as a last resort, because I

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was out of ammunition." He picked up the automatic, and broke it to show the empty magazine, whereat his victim swore chokingly.

"I expected your treacherous shot of course," Beachey went on. "I know that yellow Fordney blood of yours from way back. I figured you'd act just as you did. First you'd run; and then, getting partly over your scare, would come sneaking back like the cowardly dog you are, to make sure you'd ended me and gloat. But you were up against something more deadly than powder and lead to your kind, Bud; you were up against brains."

The mountaineer strained at his bonds.

"Shoot me, ef you're a-gwine to, an' stop yer damn' ta'ntin'," he panted. "Anythin' 's better 'n bein' talked ter death."

"But I'm not going to shoot you," Beachey said. "As I told you, you have nothing to fear from me. And, unlike you, I always keep my word. Unless Judge Jeffries dies, I shall——"

He broke off. In the excitement of the pursuit, he had forgotten the cause of it.

"I must go to the house." He sprang to his feet. "Before I decide anything about you, Fordney, I must find out what conditions are there."

"Hold on thar. Wait a minute. Was that feller I picked off thar Judge Jeffries—Judge Clay Jeffries?"

"It was," said Beachey. "And for that reason, if for no other, I should advise you to make no attempt to escape. If you are found wandering around in this locality with no explanation to offer, you'll be lynched sure. Your only hope of getting away is through me." He vanished in the shadows of the trees.

Twenty minutes later, he returned to find his prisoner still sullenly awaiting him.

"You're in luck, Fordney," he said in a low voice. "You were a notch off in your shooting, and Judge Jeffries is still alive. But don't draw too much assurance from that fact. The doctor tells me that the bullet lodged in the lung, and that the odds are all against him.

"Now listen to what I say!"—sharply. "If Jeffries dies, I shall of course have to turn you over to the authorities. But until that contingency is settled, I am going to hold you as my prisoner. How did you get here?"

"HEERED yuh was snitchin' around in the mountings, tryin' ter git somep'n on me, and follered yuh down to Cincinnati. They told me at yer hotel yuh'd jest started fer over here in th' Bluegrass, and I managed to ketch the same train yuh was on. Could have got yuh then, but 'lowed I'd better wait, blast it."

"Curb your regrets," said Beachey. "It may be all for the best. And you misunderstood me. I was not asking for your full bloodhound itinerary, but merely how you got out here from the station."

"Oh, that! Why, when yuh got off the train, I heered yuh tell the feller with the jitney to drive ye out to Beechlands, and I come after yuh."

"Afoot?"

"Sure. I ast my way along the pike."

"Good. Then there will be no vehicle to account for. Now pay heed, and see that you do exactly as I bid you. You are going back to the house with me as a man who has been assisting me in my search for the murderer. I have told them that he got away from me into the corn-field, but that I caught a glimpse of him crossing the plowed strip, a little short fellow with the build of a jockey. Consequently, you will not be suspected, but can go to town with me in the taxicab, and take the train with me for Cincinnati without question."

"An' how ef I don't choose to do hit?" Fordney studied him gloweringly.

Beachey shrugged his shoulders.

"Suit yourself. The hue and cry hasn't started yet, but in another hour these fields will be full of searching men. The sheriff has already telephoned to Lexington for dogs. You haven't a chance to get away. And, if you escape lynching, you are certain to get twenty years for shooting with intent to kill. Or, if Jeffries dies, you swing."

In spite of himself, Fordney shivered convulsively.

"Ef I swing," he said in a slow, thick voice, "I reckon yuh know they's other Fordneys. Sooner or later, yuh'll git what's comin' ter yuh."

Beachey laughed.

"I shall be just as ready for them, Bud, as I was for you. There isn't a weapon in your whole dog-robbing Fordney crew, that can get me." It amused the lawyer to play upon the odd notion he had cultivated among the mountaineers.

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"What are yuh after, anyhow?" Fordney asked after a few moments of unwontedly hard thought.

"I want a straight confession of your part in the blowing up of that dam; how you did it, who ordered you to do it, the way those orders came to you. I don't want you personally. If you come through to my satisfaction, I shall have no further interest in you. And if Judge Jeffries lives, I shall turn you free. Only, in that case, I would advise you to put a wide berth between yourself and the Cumberlands."

"How do I know yuh'll turn me free?" demanded Fordney suspiciously. "Yuh ain't givin' me no guarantees."

"Nothing but my word."

"How do I know yuh've got the power to turn me free?"

"I haven't," said Beachey equably. "I'm taking it."

THIS statement made more impression than anything the lawyer had said yet. The autocratic assumption fitted the ideal the mountain people held of him. They exaggerated his power and position. He was one of themselves, who had risen above them and become a great man in the big, outside world.

Also, Fordney was wise enough to see that Beachey was open to a bargain; and even a bad bargain in his present dilemma was better than none at all.

While he pondered, there came to their ears a hum of flivvers and a honking of motor-horns in the distance—the first bay of the gathering pack.

"Better make up your mind," said Beachey, significantly. "Are you going with me, or shall I turn you over to the posse?"

"I only followed orders about that there dam"—sullenly. "I done what I was paid for."

"Where did the orders come from?"

"Coal Co'poration. Headquarters."

"When?"

"That same night. 'Bout ten o'clock."

"How did you get the word?"

"Code telegraph."

"Still got it?"

"Yes"—reluctantly. "It's in the cupboard up ter my cabin."

"All right. I shall want it. But that's enough now"—as the noise of the gathering motors increased. "We had bettter be starting."

He smashed the rifle across the log on which he was sitting, and thrust the pieces deep into its hollow; then, drawing his knife, prepared to cut the grapevine bonds. But before doing so, he gave a word of warning.

"Just as between old acquaintances, Bud," he said, "I may as well mention that I got a fresh clip of cartridges for the automatic while I was at the house."

CONSTANCE remained at Beechlands overnight; for it was two o'clock before the surgeon from Cincinnati summoned by the local practitioner arrived with two trained nurses, and until that time, there had seemed no one else capable of taking charge. Then she had naturally waited to hear the result of the specialist's examination; so it was long after five o'clock before Nannie Wendell could prevail upon her to retire to the square, old-fashioned room which had been prepared for her.

Yet when Nannie, hollow-eyed, with all her sparkle and vivacity washed out, came tiptoeing in at nine the next morning, she found Constance up, and putting on her hat in readiness to leave.

"Connie!" she cried reproachfully. "And I so wanted you to rest! I don't believe you have slept a wink. You, just out of a sick bed, too! You look like a ghost."

"Oh, I am all right." Constance spoke shortly. "But tell me?"—quickly. "How is he? The colored maid told me she'd heard he was no worse."

Nannie sank wearily on the bed.

"I've just talked to the nurse who came off duty. It's the old, 'As well as can be expected; impossible to tell the outcome yet.' He was conscious for a few moments after the examination, she says; then lapsed into coma again. They're not going to probe for the bullet, I believe, but let it become encysted.

"But, oh, Connie, even at the best, it's going to be a long pull. Surely, you are not going to leave me?" She clasped her hands about her knees, her eyes beseeching. "Why, you have got to stay! I can't be here alone through these awful, empty days of waiting. If there was only something to do—the house to run, or anything.

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But old Aunt Judy's been here for years, and won't stand a word of interference. And it would be as much as my life is worth to stick my nose into Clay's room; you know what trained nurses are. Don't leave me, Connie, darling; promise me you'll stay on. I simply won't be able to endure it without you."

Constance, who was fastening her veil, did not answer at once; but Nannie could see her changing expressions reflected in the glass. She longed intensely to assent. And yet it seemed to her that to remain under the circumstances would be an act of more than questionable taste.

"I would like to oblige you, Nannie"—hesitatingly; "but you know that if Judge Jeffries were himself, I would not be a welcome guest. No; I don't see how in decency I can stay. It would be taking advantage of his unconscious condition."

"BUNK!" Nannie protested bluntly. "Maybe poor Clay wouldn't welcome you with his head right now, but he would with his heart. Don't you remember how he begged you to come here last spring?"

Constance had turned away, so that Nannie could not see her face even in the mirror.

"Sooner or later"—there was a wise, acute look on Nannie's elfish features—"Clay is going to realize the injustice he has done you. He is too clear-headed, too generous, not to. That is"—her eyes filling—"if he gets well."

"Stop that!" Constance's voice rang. She came over and gripped Nannie by the shoulders. "There are no 'ifs.' He is going to get well. Don't dare think anything else. I won't let myself do so, even for a second. Believe it, Nannie. Know it. We mustn't weaken. And, yes"—she seized upon this excuse as the sole justification she could offer to herself for remaining near Jeffries—"just to hold you to the mark, to see that you keep on believing, I'll stay until he is out of danger."

So, having promised, she telephoned to Delia to bring over some of her things, enough for a week's visit. But the period she had set for her stay elapsed, and still the doctors withheld any definite assurance of Jeffries's recovery. He was hovering between life and death; the one hope lay in the strength of his constitution.

She did not stop to count those wearing days; they dragged by in a monotonous procession. In the house, it was difficult not to be influenced by the atmosphere of anxiety and suspense; so she spent much of her time out-of-doors, sometimes walking with Nannie, more often drifting about alone, murmuring the phrases which had become a part of her, a vibration through her being: "He must live! He shall live!"

Sometimes she would vary her walks by a visit to the stables, where she would talk "horse" to Ed Thornhill, the rheumatic, gray-haired old trainer, or listen to his reminiscences of Jeffries's boyhood.

BEACHEY had returned to New York, and the only person she saw beyond those of the household was John Bell, who had come down once or twice to consult her. He was still seeking the vanished Joybells.

One morning, when she had been at Beechlands about eight days, she was walking down the long, tree-shaded avenue which led to the gates, and looked up to see the detective coming toward her. He had left his flivver in the road, and was trudging along with his inevitable derby hat in his hand. His face, although flushed and perspiring, held its usual lack of expression, and she could not tell whether he had brought her favorable news or not.

"Afraid I've come at a bad time, Mrs. Lee," he said as he reached her. "They tell me in Bainbridge that Judge Jeffries is pretty low to-day."

"A mistake!"—firmly, although she had paled. "Any change now must be for the better."

"Well, that's good," Bell returned vaguely. His round, pale eyes, as nearly as they could indicate anything, showed a pitying admiration. "Whew! It's warm out in the sun." He mopped his face with his handkerchief. "Pleasant here in the shade, though."

"Let us sit down." She moved toward a rustic seat about the trunk of a great beech tree a little distance away. Bell followed her, carefully placing his hat beside him on the bench.

"This is fine. By jingo!" His glance wandered over the grove's shaded vistas to

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the old, pillared house. "It would be a darned shame if Judge Jeffries was to die, and have to leave it all.

"Do you know," he went on after a pause, "with all due respect to the doctors, I believe the only medicine that'll do him any good is to have this charge against him cleared up."

"The jockey club has taken no action yet?" she asked quickly.

"Oh, no; and won't, of course, as long as he's so ill. But I'll bet that, whether he's conscious or unconscious, it's in the back of the Judge's mind all the time, boiling and stewing there; and that's what's holding him back. Golly!" He gave an exasperated gesture. "If I could just figure out some way to put the clamps on Gabriel and DeVries, take it from me we'd have him on the up-grade in no time."

"I believe so too." She smiled at him gratefully, although the wistful tears were in her eyes. "Mr. Beachey has a plan. He wrote me just before he left for New York that he expected developments very soon, and that I must try not to be impatient. I suppose"—wearily—"it does take time to gather all the evidence."

Bell did not appear particularly sanguine in regard to Beachey's efforts.

"If I could only locate that fool horse, it would be a pipe. I'd have DeVries eating out of my hand. Too late, though, I'm afraid; they were smart enough to do away with him."

"And you haven't found a single trace?"

"Not one. And we've scratched over every foot of those hills for twenty-five miles back of Covington. That's what I've come down to see you about. It don't seem really worth while to keep up the search any longer."

Constance made no answer; and Bell, picking up a twig from the ground, began snapping it between his fingers.

"It's heartbreaking, that's what it is," he muttered. "To know that you've got all the facts at the end of your fingers, and then can't prove them. All the breaks have been dead against us. Why, only three days ago, I thought I had the whole case sewed up, Joybells just as good as in my hands; and right away the thing turns and goes sour on me. Nothing to it."

"What happened?" she asked alertly.

"IT'S hardly worth telling about, except to show you that we haven't been overlooking anything. But it was like this. I'd taken an early start, almost before it was light, and was scouting out in a new direction that we hadn't covered yet, through a pretty wild piece of country. Pretty soon the road got so bad I had to park my flivver and walk; and along about five o'clock, I met up with a couple of hicks, a young man and an old one, hot-footing it down the hill.

"They asked me if I'd seen a stray horse. Some of their stock had broke out of the barn the night before, and one of 'em had got clean away. I told them no; and described the way I had come. And at that, the old man began to cuss fit to blast the bark off the trees. 'The damn chestnut wind-sucker has loped off over the ridge,' he says: 'and I can't foller him no further with this bad knee of mine. You'll have to try and ketch him alone, Thad.'

" 'Chestnut' made me prick up my ears, and I asked for more particulars about this lost horse. The young one started to answer, but before he could get a word out, the old man shut him up with a dirty look, and did the talking himself.

" ' 'Twas a little, roan mare,' he told me. Then he turned to the boy. 'Reckon 'tain't no use to try and chase her afoot, Thad,' " Bell mimicked. " 'Better come back to the house and have breakfast; after that, you can saddle old Fanny and start over the ridge.'

"I made up my mind right then that the old fellow was lying. And what was his reason for lying, if this runaway wasn't Joybells? So I went along with them to where they lived, a lonely old place back in a hollow, not another house within five miles of it, and I invited myself to breakfast. The old man was as nervous as a cat; he showed he didn't like having me around any too well, and for that reason I stuck tighter.

"After breakfast, Thad set off on his hunt; but I didn't budge. I looked at it this way. If he got hold of Joybells and brought him back, I'd be right there. If he didn't, the horse would be picked up somewhere by one of the farmers, and, with all the lines I had out, I'd be sure to hear of it. It was a cinch, I thought.

"And then, about nine o'clock, Thad

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came riding out of the woods, leading a skinny, little, roan mare, that you'd have thought was Man-o'-War to see the fuss those two made over getting her back.

"So, you see, it's just as I say, Mrs. Lee. The breaks are all against us. There was a lead that nine times out of ten would have worked out; and yet when it came to a show-down, there was nothing to it."

"Still it was curious," Constance said thoughtfully, "that the old man should have spoken of a chestnut, when he meant a roan."

"Oh, he was all excited. Probably a slip of the tongue. You can't go against the facts; and it wasn't a chestnut but a roan that was brought back."

"Ye-es." Constance answered at random. Her eyes were on a white-clad figure coming toward them through the trees, the nurse off duty taking her afternoon walk.

Quite forgetting Bell, Constance ran to meet her. But the noncommittal lips only returned to her inquiry one of those guarded *placebos* handed down from the days of Florence Nightingale: "Resting a little easier, I think," or, "No definite change," or something of the sort—she hardly knew what. For under the bromidic utterance, she gathered a sense of lost hope, the acceptance of a looming, inevitable defeat.

The world went black about her; dread clutched her heart and shook her like a giant hand. She wanted to fling herself on the ground, and bury her face in the grass, and writhe and weep; but such an abandonment to grief is a luxury denied to the highly civilized. Instead, she mechanically returned to the bench where Bell was sitting.

Holding his hat, he arose as she approached, her feet dragging slowly over the turf, her eyes looking through, beyond him, her hands clasping and unclasping.

"No improvement?" he said.

She shook her head, unable to speak.

Bell hesitated, smoothing the nap of his derby with his hand; then he cleared his throat.

"You're not one to give up, Mrs. Lee," he said in an awkward attempt at consolation. "Remember, when we were coming down the river that night, with the old john-boat almost standing on its head, and the big logs jumping at us, and it looked like we didn't have a chance, you never lost your nerve. You said we'd win through, and we did. You won through then, and you'll win through now."

He had touched just the right chord. That strain in her which refused to submit, however crushed or overwhelmed, to anything, immediately responded.

Her hands grew still, her head lifted, her eyes cleared. She gazed about like a commander reconnoitering his field of battle.

But as she looked toward the highway beyond the gates of the grove, her glance suddenly became fixed, her lips parted, her breath came rapidly.

"The old man said a chestnut, and then a roan mare." She had taken Bell's report and was reading a new significance into it. "He was off guard, but at a question grew suspicious of you. Look here, Mr. Bell; we're going out to that hill farm—now—in your car. Oh, I know we probably won't find anything; but it's worth taking a chance on. Come!" She pulled at Bell's sleeve. "Do come," she urged. "I—I've got a hunch."

THEY had been bumping over the ruts of a wood road for what seemed to Constance an interminable time. And when the going had become so bad that they were shaken about like peas in a basket, Bell stopped.

"We'll have to walk from here," he said. "The farm is yonder behind those trees. We'd better scout around and see what we can see before we go direct to the house."

He took the lead now, and it was Constance who followed. They climbed a stone wall into a treeless pasture field, and skirting the thick growth of timber, presently found themselves on the edge of a steep ravine. Constance, peering down into its purple depths, reached back, and suddenly clutched Bell's arm.

"Look!" she whispered. "Look! Do you see something moving down there among the trees?"

She pointed, and his eyes following the direction began to blink rapidly.

"I do see something." His mouth was dry. "Sort of tawny-like."

But she had already started down the side of the ravine, a sheer, pathless descent among rocks, trees and tangling vines.

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Although she too slipped and stumbled, she was quicker and more sure-footed than he, and for a time he lost sight of her. When he found her again, she was leaning against a tree, her breath coming in sobs. She lifted a shaking hand and waved it. Just across the gully from them, Bell saw Joybells hobbled to a stake.

Constance puckered her lips and gave a low, clear whistle—the call she made when she had sugar to give her horses.

The chestnut stopped cropping at the sound and, lifting his head, pricked his ears and whinnied in response.

She ran to him, and threw her arms about his neck, and laid her cheek against his bent foretop.

"Joybells!" she cried. "Joybells! Joybells!"

JOYBELLS was thin, his coat rough and miry, his mane and tail tangled with burrs. The yellow dye had not entirely faded from his slender hocks. But he trotted after Constance with the unmistakable dancing step and arched neck of the Bonny Bells blood.

The climb up the ravine was a difficult one; but just as that was safely accomplished, and they were leading Joybells across the open pasture, a tall, young countryman riding down the road drew up at the sight of them and after staring a moment, dismounted and vaulted over the wall.

"It's Thad!" Bell jerked his hat down over his face and dodged behind the thoroughbred. "Wait until the lad gets up close and starts to talk; then I'll step out. We'll give him and his flimflamming old daddy the surprise of their lives."

But Joybells spoiled that bit of strategy. Since DeVries had filed his teeth, he was wary of any one approaching him from the off side; and now as the detective ducked behind him, he laid back his ears and circled rapidly away.

Bell stood revealed; and the advancing Thad, recognizing him, halted abruptly, then, turning, streaked for the road. Heedless of Bell's shouts to stop, he flung himself over the wall, leaped on his horse, and was off down the hill. Bell, lumbering in pursuit, reached his flivver and cranked it into action; then began to swear. It was impossible for him to turn in that narrow lane.

But Constance, seeing his predicament, had already knotted Joybells' trailing halter into a makeshift bridle; and now as Bell glanced helplessly toward her, he saw her swing herself up on the big chestnut's back and head him for the wall. It was higher on the inside than from the road, a difficult leap. But straight at it she drove. Bell's heart was in his mouth. But Joybells, lifting to it under her cool, steady pull, went over like a bird and, landing in stride, dashed off after the fleeing Thad.

The boy had promptly left the road and was speeding off across country. Over rocks and fallen logs, in and out through the timber, he flogged his mount—a bay mare with the long head and legs of a hunter. But Constance was not to be shaken off. Every risk he took, she matched; every breakneck jump and threatening obstacle.

With a quick realization of conditions, she began to head him off from the thicker woods toward which he was making in the hope of losing her. Instead of following him direct, she cut across an angle; and so edged him gradually down the hill toward the plowed fields and the highway.

Unable to shake her, and perhaps with no stomach for such daring horsemanship, he finally cut across a pasture lot and turned into the main road. When she, hard in pursuit, reached the same point, he was lost in a blur of dust about a quarter of a mile ahead, going for all he was worth. And the bay mare was even better on the level than she had been in the rough.

"It's going to be a race," Constance murmured. "A race, Joybells. And we've got to win."

She was riding jockeywise now, far up on the horse's neck, a Tod Sloan crouch, guiding and encouraging him with hands and knees and voice. To her spirit, the years had fallen away; and she was once more the harum-scarum, little sorrel-top who had stolen old Bonny Bells out of his paddock to race him bareback up hill and down dale all over the countryside.

Once again she was swinging up a white Kentucky turnpike on a golden streak. Her hair came loose and streamed out behind her in the sunlight like the tail of a comet. A flock of chickens scattered squawking from under Joybells' thundering hoofs. Flivvers, buggies, farm-wagons

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stopped as she went flashing by, their occupants goggling at the amazing spectacle. And Thad, too, driven by a guilty conscience, was pushing his horse to the limit.

BUT she was overtaking him. Foot by foot she was gaining. And then she felt Joybells begin to falter under her and slow up. He was showing that temperamental streak which had made him a discredited outcast. He had had a hard race already, and he saw no reason why he should be forced to this headlong sprint over the graveled pike.

She urged him every way in her power. She kicked him in the ribs with her heels, struck him with her clenched fist, lifted him with the bridle of frayed rope; yet persistently he dogged it. Sobbingly she leaned over, and talked directly to him as though he were a thinking, reasoning being. She told him what was at stake, begged, entreated him to go on.

And whether it was the effect of her appealing voice, or whether he merely took it into his head once more to try, he suddenly responded.

With a burst of that magnificent speed which had made him unbeatable as a two-year-old, he lunged forward and tore down the highway. No stake horse could have withstood that whirlwind challenge; certainly not a plebeian bay mare from back in the hills. Within a dozen strides he had regained all the ground he had lost. By leaps he cut down the distance between him and the fugitive. They clattered through an old covered wooden bridge together, with Joybells not a length behind. Fifty feet on the farther side, the two horses were racing on even terms.

An old campaigner like Joybells knew just what to do. Constance hardly had to twitch the rein. Steadily he bore in, crowding the bay mare closer and closer to the fence, until Thad had to pull up.

"What do you want?" the scared boy tried to bluster. "You must be a crazy woman."

"You know what I want." Constance reached over and laid a firm hand on his bridle. "You are going to be arrested for horse-stealing, unless you come back with me and tell just where you got this horse of mine."

"Oh! Is that your hoss?"—with a clumsy pretense at surprise. "Well—well now, I'm mighty glad to hear it. Pap and me found him strayin' in the woods, and took him in until his owner'd come along and claim him."

"And yet you carefully concealed the fact from the first man who appeared to make inquiries? Stop lying. How much did Jim DeVries agree to pay your father for hiding this horse for him?"

He might have been obstinate with a man, but this woman who seemed to know everything rattled him.

"Hunderd an' fifty dollars," he confessed sullenly.

"That's all I need to know now. You can tell the rest of your story to Mr. Bell. Then, if you give us the whole truth, you may go home free."

She was on fire to get back to Beechlands to act upon an idea that had come to her. But it was necessary to control her impatience, and wait until Bell came chugging up in his flivver. And then it was discovered that Joybells was limping badly. Constance had felt him stumble, as they bore the bay mare in toward the fence, although he had caught himself at once and kept on. But the injury evidently was more serious than she had thought; for the horse now seemed scarcely able to walk.

"They'll look after him for you at Taylor's livery barn at Elmsdale," Thad suggested, pointing to a village just ahead; "or if you wanted to stand the expense, you could have him loaded on a truck and toted home."

The latter alternative appealed to Constance, since she was anxious to place the crippled Joybells under Thornhill's care; so leaving Bell to make the necessary arrangements, and look after Thad, she took the flivver and drove back alone.

It was late in the afternoon when she arrived; and jumping from the car, she ran into the house, her heart beating madly.

ON THE stairs she met the doctor just coming down from Jeffries's room, and looking very grave.

"Doctor Pringle," she intercepted him, "do you think it would harm Judge Jeffries to be given a message, something he is very anxious to hear—about this turf swindle,

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"I shall remember all my life that you stayed," he murmured. "You do forgive me, Constance?"

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you know? It is the worry over that, I am sure, which is holding him back."

He pursed up his lips.

"Why, to tell you the truth, Mrs. Lee," he said, "I don't imagine it would make any difference. Judge Jeffries is conscious, but very low. If you wish it, though, and the message is hopeful, I will give it to him."

"Then tell him," she said, "that the real swindlers are caught. His vindication is certain. And, Doctor"—she laid her hand on his arm—"don't let him know that the message is from me. Say that it comes from—from Ed Thornhill."

He bowed and went back up the stairs; and she passed on into her own room. But she was restless, she could not stay there; neither could she bear to leave the house. She wandered uneasily from the porch to the drawing-room and back again.

At last the nurse, whose dirge-like ambiguities had so depressed her in the grove, came down the stairs. Constance asked for news.

"Why, Mrs. Lee!" she was told. "Doctor Pringle says it's almost a miracle, the way he has reacted to that message you sent him. Of course"—hedging—"it may be only a brief rally. We mustn't count too much on it yet. But—well, it's fair at least to say that there's a distinct improvement."

Constance thanked her, and went out to the stables. Her heart was singing, her face as rapturous as the roses of the old garden through which she passed. In the paved yard, she found Joybells, with a couple of negro swipes plying their combs and brushes on his ruffled coat, while Thornhill with sponges and liniments worked over his injured leg. The trainer looked up at her with a mournful shake of the head.

"It's a snapped tendon, Mrs. Lee," he said. "I'm sorry, but as he stands, he's a total loss to you. His racing days are over. All you can do is retire him to the stud, and his reputation for dogging it ain't going to help him much as a sire. Too bad he couldn't have won just one big handicap before it happened."

She laughed indifferently at the thought of her financial loss; then as she looked at the big chestnut, her eyes went misty.

"Don't you mind, Joybells." She patted his neck. "For you there will always be green pastures and the tenderest care. You might have taken down every big event on the calendar, from Epsom Downs to the Melbourne Cup, and all together they wouldn't have equaled the stake you raced for and won to-day."

AS BEACHEY, always punctual to the minute, entered his office at nine o'clock the next morning, his secretary handed him a telegram. It was from Constance, and ran:

> Joybells recovered. People who have been holding him, father and son by the name of Lowry, confess they were hired by DeVries to keep the horse concealed. News communicated to Judge Jeffries, and has had a marked beneficial effect. Doctors pronounce his condition greatly improved, and hold out hopes of his speedy convalescence.

Beachey read it through twice, and then laid it on his desk. There was no change in his expression, beyond a slight tightening of the lips; yet he recognized that yellow slip of paper as the death warrant to his life's one dream, for until this he had never definitely resigned all hope of winning her. It even annulled and made of no avail his gesture of self-sacrifice; she no longer needed him. With such a hold upon De Vries, this detective, Bell, could clear up the whole swindling conspiracy. He, Beachey, would have to work fast, or else he would find himself forestalled.

"Miss McHugh, will you go to my private file, and bring me the papers marked 'Latonia Matter'?" His voice as he spoke to his secretary was perhaps just a shade dryer than usual, his manner a trifle more precise. "And then, Miss McHugh, please get Mr. Perry Gabriel for me on the telephone. At this hour, you will probably reach him at his apartment."

Beachey, since his return to New York, had through his agents kept close tab upon the movements of Gabriel and DeVries, Gabriel especially, and knew that the latter had been making rather a point of showing himself everywhere.

It was the nagging of an uneasy conscience, Beachey was persuaded. Gabriel had no reason to fear exposure—his name had never even been mentioned in connection with the turf scandal, and he probably flattered himself that he had spiked the guns of every possible accuser. So he

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might not be frightened exactly; on the contrary, he was doubtless pluming himself arrogantly on the way things had gone, regarding himself as a genius of intrigue, a bold guerrilla who had played a risky game and won. But even with all this complacent self-admiration, an inherent coward like Gabriel would not be able to rid himself entirely of misgivings.

He would be constantly driven to test the public attitude toward him. He would want to be present at any discussion of the swindle among his associates, so as to keep track of their reactions and be prepared to combat any veering of suspicion toward himself.

And this diagnosis of Beachey's was absolutely correct. When Gabriel read in the papers that Jeffries had been shot down, he felt almost as if it were a special intervention of Providence in his behalf: all danger of investigation from that quarter was temporarily if not permanently suspended. Of course the circumstance had its minor annoyances—it revived the Latonia scandal as a subject for talk and speculation; but as the days passed on, with the mysterious prowler who had shot Jeffries still uncaught, and his victim still alive, even if hanging on only by a thread, other interests intervened, the buzz of comment and conjecture died down.

Then, just as he had finished his breakfast this morning and was glancing over his mail, the telephone rang.

Without lifting his eyes from the letter he was reading, he stretched out a languid hand for the instrument; but as he heard the voice at the other end of the wire, his indifferent, slightly supercilious expression changed to a black scowl. Beachey! He felt a qualm of slinking apprehension. Was that blood-sucking blackguard after him again?

"Good morning, Mr. Gabriel!" That bland, punctilious tone meant mischief, Gabriel was sure. "Some rather vital developments have come up in that matter I am handling for you, and I don't feel like proceeding further without a personal consultation. Will you be at my office at eleven o'clock to-day?"

"No; I will not," Gabriel answered disagreeably. "I don't know of any matter you are handling for me. Besides, I have an important directors' meeting at just that hour."

"Then you had better send notice to the meeting that you will be unavoidably absent, or arrange for a proxy. The matter I refer to is the one on which you retained me when we met at Cincinnati last month, and I can assure you is more urgent than any other possible claim upon your time. I shall expect you at eleven." He rang off.

GABRIEL slammed down the telephone, and swore freely. Who did Beachey think he was talking to, anyhow, to use such a tone as that? The impudent pettifogger! Be at his office at eleven o'clock, eh? Why, he'd see that cheap crook in hell forty times over, before— But hold on! What was that Beachey had said about new developments?

Growling and mumbling to himself, he ordered his car, and a little after eleven o'clock slouched sulkily into the lawyer's office, where he found DeVries already on hand. The trainer, nervously chewing gum, was hunched up in a chair near the window; Beachey sat at his desk, composedly glancing over a file of papers.

"What's the big idea in all this, Beachey?" Gabriel demanded defiantly. "If you imagine I'm going to chase down here every time you choose to crook a finger, you'd better get a different notion. I did it to-day. But, by God, it's the last time, and you can understand it!"

"I am very glad to hear you say so," Beachey replied evenly; "for I have exactly the same opinion. Sit down."

Gabriel looked blank, as he subsided into the chair indicated to him. This was the last sentiment he had expected. He turned with a scowl to DeVries.

"What are you doing here?"

"Search me." The trainer interrupted his perturbed champing for a moment. "Same 's you, I reckon. He sent for me, and I came."

Beachey glanced from one to the other.

"I shall not keep either of you long in suspense," he said.

Something in his tone, hard and severe as the plain austerity of this book-lined office of his, struck a chill to the souls of the two men he had summoned, a sense of ominous foreboding. There was no trace of that underlying, sardonic amusement he had always shown in his previous dealings with them, that almost feline pleasure he

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had taken in playing with them until he got ready to pounce.

He was cold and apathetic now; and even one so disregardful of others as Gabriel could not but observe the change in his appearance. He looked older and—not ill exactly, but like a man who had passed through some great crisis and bore its indelible impress, one for whom the zest of life was burnt out, and who now merely followed the routine from habit. His eyes, more aloof than ever, gazed hollowly from under his heavy brows.

"I have information here"—he detached Constance's telegram from the file of papers before him—"that the horse, Joybells, has been recovered."

DeVries leaped up from his chair; then settled back with an incredulous sneer.

"That's a trick!" he declared. "I was half expecting you'd try to pull that one on me, 'cause I remembered I'd told you Joybells was hid back in the hills. But it was a trap I laid for you, Beachey, and you've walked right into it. The old horse was really shipped East and buried there, just as I told the judges."

"FORTUNATE for you, if that were the truth." Beachey flicked a contemptuous glance at him. "But I hardly think it likely that Mrs. Lee is mistaken in her property. Also, I am very sure that you did not confide to me the name of the people you hired to harbor the horse. Read this telegram." He passed it over. "Then you will be better able to decide whether my information is authentic."

DeVries snatched it from him, ran his eye swiftly over the first two lines, then dashed toward the door.

"I wouldn't!" Beachey did not even raise his voice, but there was a quality to it that halted DeVries as effectively as a leveled revolver might have done. "I should have warned you," he went on, "that a couple of police officers who are clients of mine are waiting in the outer office. If either of you attempt to leave this room before I give permission, you will be arrested on a charge of horse-stealing."

"Either of us?" Gabriel questioned sharply. "How do you get that way, Beachey? I had nothing to do with the silly old horse or what became of him."

"You did, too." DeVries swung around angrily toward him. "You had just as much to do with it as I did. You knew all about—" He checked himself suddenly at a quick glance of caution from Gabriel.

Beachey broke in upon the succeeding pause.

"Exactly." He nodded grimly. "Mr. Gabriel was possessed of a guilty knowledge that makes him an accessory both before and after the fact, just as you, DeVries, are an accessory to his blowing up of the dam."

"The dam?" They were both on their feet now, pasty-faced, glancing uncertainly, stealthily at one another.

"What dam?" DeVries tried to ask indifferently; then sat down under the malevolent look Gabriel gave him.

"The fishing club dam up in the Cumberlands, of course, that you two blew up in order to prevent Mrs. Lee from reaching Latonia."

Gabriel shook his head, with a derisive laugh.

"Any more heinous crimes and misdemeanors?" he jeered. "Lord, Beachey, but you are shooting wild to-day. I'd almost forgotten about that dam; yet as I recall the circumstances, the thing gave way from a flood up in the mountains. According to you, though, I'm supposed to have raced up there and placed a charge of dynamite under it. Is that it? Fortunately, I can prove an alibi. I was in Cincinnati all that night. Couldn't have gotten away, if I'd wanted to, on account of the floods."

"Oh, what's the use, Gabriel?" Beachey spoke wearily. "I've got it all here." He flipped over the papers before him. "The sworn confession of Bud Fordney, strong-arm agent of the Coal Corporation, that he dynamited the dam under orders; the code telegram containing those orders from Fordney's immediate superior; a similar telegram to that official from President Allison's private secretary; the affidavit of a witness who heard Allison cursing you that night as a slave-driving murderer; and finally the record of a long-distance call from you in Cincinnati to Allison in New York. A straight and convincing chain of evidence which lands the primary culpability directly back on you, and on which, with the additional testimony that can be obtained—don't imagine that Allison won't squeal—I will guarantee to secure you a

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sentence of at least twenty years in State's prison. You can read this stuff if you have any doubt of my statement."

Gabriel took the papers automatically. But he could hardly turn the sheets, his fingers were shaking so. After he had glanced through a page or so, he laid the sheaf of papers back on the desk.

"Twenty years in State's prison?" He fumbled for his handkerchief, and wiped his dry lips.

"AT LEAST that," said Beachey impassively. "And don't think your wealth or position will help you. You'll not be tried in New York but down in the country that you devastated, by a jury of mountaineers, friends and relatives of the people who lost their homes, and had their farms ruined, and their crops and live stock swept away. Fact is, you'll be lucky to get tried at all. They're more likely to take out out and lynch you."

"My God!" Gabriel gasped.

He flung himself out of his chair and half-way across Beachey's desk, groveling.

"I can't stand it!" he whimpered. "You've got to get me out of it some way, Beachey. You don't want to hold anything against me, that I ever said about you. I didn't mean it. And I'll pay. I'll pay whatever you say. I'll do more than that"—eagerly. "I'll throw all my business to you, and help you with my connections. Why, good God, man, I can be worth a million a year to you."

Beachey listened unmoved to his frantic pleading.

"Control yourself, Gabriel," he said disgustedly, "and listen to me."

Then, as the almost hysterical man dropped back into his chair, he leaned his elbows on his desk, and looked from one to the other of the two delinquents. When he finally spoke, his tone was as hard and unrelenting as flint.

"You will do well to pay heed to this, too, DeVries," he said, "since what I have to say applies equally to both of you. Both of you are guilty in both instances, the horse-stealing and the blowing up of the dam. But neither of you has yet been arrested on either charge. The evidence against you is entirely in my hands. I can use it as I see fit. I can turn it over to the authorities, or I can keep it secret. It is wholly up to you, whether you go to State's prison or not. I am offering you an alternative."

Gabriel perked up a bit at that, a suggestion of a sneer about the corners of his mouth. Just as he had thought! Beachey was out for blackmail. Well, the hound had them cornered; nothing to do but settle.

"An alternative?" he broke in. "That's the stuff. I knew you'd come around all right, old man. And, believe me, you won't ever regret it." He was already casting about in his mind for some way in which he might get even.

Beachey gave a wintry smile.

"I don't imagine that you'll be so enthusiastic when you hear the alternative I offer, Mr. Gabriel. It is that you go before the jockey club, and publicly exonerate Judge Jeffries of the charges now pending against him, by confessing your own full responsibility for the swindle."

Gabriel's jaw dropped.

"You're joking!" he stammered incredulously. "Why, you hate Jeffries worse than I do. You don't want him cleared. Think of the consequences. There's Connie Lee——"

Beachey froze him with a glance.

"Keep to the matter in hand, Gabriel," he advised, "or I'll withdraw my offer."

"But, hell's bells!" The sweat was beading Gabriel's forehead. "You said—you made me believe—damn it, you don't call that an alternative, do you? Why, I'd be cut by every one I know, thrown out of my clubs! There isn't a soul in New York would have anything to do with me."

BEACHEY shrugged indifferently.

"An island entirely surrounded by loneliness, eh? Very likely. But I don't see any other way out of it."

"Damn you, Beachey!" Gabriel flared. "I'll show you up; that's what I'll do. You may get me; but I'll get you, if I have to spend my last cent to do it. I'll hire the best lawyers in the country, and set them up against you. They'll make a monkey of you."

"They've never succeeded in doing it yet, although a number of them have tried. But don't let me influence your judgment, Mr. Gabriel. Follow either alternative you please; the results will be the same."

Gabriel gnawed his finger-nails.

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"You might as well give me a pistol, and tell me to shoot myself. It's suicide either way."

"That's another alternative," said Beachey cheerfully. "But one that you will never take. No; I am quite sure that in the end you will go before the jockey club.

"And now, Mr. DeVries, it is your turn. As I have told you, you are an accessory to the destruction of this dam, and you are also aware that you are a horse-thief. But I am a clement judge, and you may go free on one condition. A condition that applies equally to your friend here"—nodding to Gabriel.

"You will both," he said, "turn over every cent of your winnings on that Latonia race to the devastated district in the Cumberlands. You will place this money—cash, remember—in my hands, and I will forward it to the relief committee and send you their receipt for it. I will give you a day's time in which to do this; and what money has been spent will have to be made up by one or the other of you. This gift will be anonymous. It will purport to come from an unknown donor. I know that both of your generous souls will rejoice in this opportunity to do good by stealth."

DeVries's chair was overthrown. He swallowed his gum and choked on it.

"Me? Give up everything I won?" He gave the effect of a man screaming in a whisper. "It's all I've got. I put up every cent I had. What'll I do? I can't get a job even as a swipe; I'm barred off every track in America. Say, Mr. Beachey! Leave me hold back something. He"—pointing at Gabriel—"has got more'n he knows what to do with. But me? Why, I'll starve!"

Beachey spread out his hands.

"I have given you my ultimatum. Between you, you will turn in to me every penny of your gains. That is all, I think—" with a nod of dismissal. "Or, no; I almost forgot. Mr. Gabriel, you will send me in addition to the other money your personal check for fifty thousand dollars—as a fee for my advice in this matter."

IN THE first days of Jeffries's convalescence, a joy that was immeasurable possessed Constance. She woke with the morning to a shining world, so tremulously beautiful that she held her breath in wonder. She looked out on the moonlit lawns and gardens at night with an ecstasy so keen that it stung her. Laughter bubbled in her voice. She felt a sort of ethereal intoxication; the spirit in her had wings. She could not keep still. She ran through the grounds with the dogs in a mad chase of nothing, faster than they. He would soon be out again under these trees, *his* trees. One afternoon, she caught herself singing near his windows, and stopped guiltily, afraid that he might hear her.

But this mood was too high, too electric to last. The scruples she had brushed away came thronging back, and demanded a sober recognition. She must leave Beechlands at once; there was no use in blinking the situation. She was an uninvited guest in the house of a man—an astute lawyer—who had found the circumstantial evidence against her so convincing that he had been forced to believe that she, the woman he loved, had entered into a conspiracy to ruin him.

The conspiracy had been exposed. He would know all the details later. But the impression interwoven with all his thoughts of her would remain always, that she was the associate, in a measure the tool, of the men who had planned it.

She, therefore, made her arrangements for an immediate departure, meaning to slip away as quickly and quietly as possible; and meanwhile a letter from Beachey was brought her, telling her of his reckoning with Gabriel and DeVries. This served temporarily to turn the current of her thoughts from her own problem.

Her first emotion on reading the letter was one of utter relief, of a thankfulness so deep that it must forever go unplumbed. She saw only the one immense fact, that Jeffries would be fully exonerated, his reputation as a sportsman restored to him without a stain on it. He could now pursue his profession and career with the unimpaired confidence of all who knew him, and with the sympathy accorded to one who had been the victim of a low and, as it had turned out, ineffectual plot.

It was only on a rereading that she noticed the letter's perfunctory and impersonal tone. It was long, it informed her in detail of all the circumstances; but it was different

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from any letter, even the most business-like, that Beachey had ever written her before.

There was something cold and dry and brittle about it. It was as bleak and dreary as his outlook on life had become. She had been his one great passion, and the world he now walked in was bare and gray. No banners waved there, no bugles sounded, no future beckoned. She, the soul of it, inciting him to live and achieve, was lost to him.

Constance did not realize, could never realize the hell Beachey had passed through to do the one great thing she had asked of him. That was beyond her apprehension of life or human nature. But the shadow that lay over the pages of his letter saddened and depressed her. She wanted to go to him, to tell him that she cared for him and valued his friendship as she had never done before. But she knew she could not; that no matter how warmly or appreciatively she wrote, it would mean little to him. A curtain had been dropped between them, and it was impenetrable.

BUT her regret was overborne by the realization that the cloud over Jeffries would soon be dispersed. And, tucking away the letter, she went in search of Nannie Wendell to tell her that she was leaving the next day.

She found her having breakfast on the porch.

"Going to-morrow!" Nannie exclaimed. "Now, you've made me spill my egg. What a mess! But, Constance, I won't let you. I can't stay here all alone, with no one to talk to. You're a cold-blooded fish's scale, even to think of such a thing."

"Now, Nannie"—Constance put up her hands—"don't argue with me. For heaven's sake, try to realize the embarrassing position I am in here."

"Nothing embarrassing about it," Nannie retorted. "You're here as my guest."

"In Judge Jeffries's house!"

"Oh, Lord!" Nannie threw her newspaper to the floor. "I can't get on to all these highfalutin curves; I'm just one of the common people. Clay has done you a beastly injustice, and you ought to be dignified enough and proud enough to camp out here until he can crawl downstairs on his knees and beg your pardon."

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Constance, her lips set obstinately, refused to treat the matter lightly.

"Then I am glad I am meek and humble enough to go."

She got up and walked down the steps, strolling off into the grove.

Some time later, when she was returning to the house, she saw Nannie coming toward her with an air so ingenuous, an expression so mild and innocent, that Constance, instead of being disarmed by it, at once became suspicious.

"You look like the butterfly's left wing to-day, honey," Nannie began flatteringly.

Constance became more alarmed.

"I know that pose," she said sternly. "You've been up to something frightful. Now, what is it?"

"You're worse than Hugo." Nannie jerked away from the hands that clutched her. "Between a medieval husband and friends who always suspect the worst, I lead a dog's life. But"—impishly defiant—"you're right for once; I have been up to something."

Constance dropped her hands despairingly.

"You've told him that I am here?"

"Well, some one was sure to tell him sooner or later, and I thought it might as well or better be me. I broke it to him gently, and I must say he bore it with fortitude. He wants to see you."

Constance flinched, and bit her lip.

"You might have curbed that tricky tongue of yours, at least until I got away." She dragged Beachey's letter from her pocket. "This came in the morning's mail. You may read it. You will see then that Judge Jeffries will be cleared without my lifting a finger in the matter. I want you to give him the letter as soon as he is able to read it. But—oh!—I did hope to be far away first.

"How could you do it, Nannie! How could you tell him I was here! He still believes me as black as events painted me and yet he is trying to make the gesture of a host. His traditions wouldn't let him do anything else. Nannie, at last you've gone too far. I shall never forgive you." She turned away, and then came back. "When does he want to see me?"

"RIGHT away"—unrepentantly. "And I must say, I think you are extremely nasty about it. Do calm down a little, first; and whatever you do, don't sweep in

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on him with that Marie-Antoinette-on-her-way-to-the-scaffold air you're wearing now."

Constance walked past her into the house, the ordeal before her blotting out her indignation at Nannie's officious interference. She was in a panic. The whole thing was so impossible. If he were well, nothing would have induced her to see him. But in his present state, whatever fantastic whim seized him must be humored.

When she reached Jeffries's door, she was trembling, her knees shaking under her. The nurse was waiting in the hall, and led her at once into the room.

The green, outside shutters were bowed before the windows, keeping out the sun, and the soft summer wind blew through them, scattering the fragrance of the roses she had cut for him that morning. Through the dim mellow glow she saw the quaint room with its old mahogany furniture, the white bed at the farther end of it, and Jeffries propped up on pillows to receive her.

All the turmoil and trepidation she was suffering melted away, lost in a great flood of pity and tenderness. Jeffries's hungry, haggard eyes drank in the sight of her.

"Mrs. Lee!" His voice sounded like a ghostly echo of his old strong tones. "How good of you!"

He clung to her hand and released it reluctantly, as she sat down beside him; but his eyes never left her face.

"Ten minutes only," said the nurse from the doorway. Then she left them alone.

"Is it truly you?" he whispered, and stretched out his hand for hers. "I want to touch you—to be sure that you are really flesh and blood. Sometimes when I was half conscious, I seemed to see you as plainly as I do now; then you would melt away. But it was no surprise to me when Nannie told me that you were at Beechlands; I felt your presence always near me."

"I—I couldn't go," she said brokenly.

He turned his head on the pillow, and looked at her entreatingly.

"I can't think much yet. I get tired, confused. But I must tell you—all that Latonia business, it bothered me. Then I got Thornhill's message. If I had been well, and felt as I did before I was hurt, I would have been frightened, afraid that you would be involved in it. I was not, though. In some way, illness swept the mists and cobwebs from my brain. I knew—surely, absolutely—that you never did the things I believed of you, the things I accused you of. You couldn't, Constance—because you are you."

A great sigh tore its way from her heart to her lips. She had always known that some day he would seek her and express his contrition. He would do her justice—"the little less, and what worlds away!" The distances of his doubt would always lie between them, parting them.

But now, without proof, he had believed. He had put reason and evidence and circumstances from him, and—believed.

All the barriers between them crashed down at his words. "The little more, and how much it was!" Happiness, that rose within her like the serene, sweeping tides of the sea! She glowed, palpitated with it.

"I shall remember all my life that you stayed," he murmured, "that you came to me here to-day. You do forgive me, Constance?"

Her fingers were on his lips.

"Oh, stop!" she cried. "It is I who have been wrong from the first. Forgive? There isn't such a word between us."

She fell on her knees beside him, and laid her cheek against his. His arms closed around her.

A MID-SEPTEMBER afternoon, under a cloudless Long Island sky, the air a sparkle of gold, a light breeze blowing from the ocean over the Jamaica plains.

With a band playing, banners waving overhead, the babble of thirty thousand voices stippled with the shouts of score-card vendors—with friends crowding around to greet and congratulate him—Jeffries stood with Constance on the club-house lawn at Belmont Park.

The blare of music stopped, the bugle sounded, the horses for the next race paraded to the post. Twenty-three of them, the pick of the season's two-year-olds—each groomed to the shining sleekness of a new silk hat—the jockeys on their backs rainbow blotches of color in their new silks. For this was the Futurity, the blue ribbon event of the autumn, and ranking with the Kentucky Derby, the Suburban, the Brooklyn Handicap, the Belmont, and the Saratoga as one of the six great races of America.

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As number seven in line, a golden chestnut with a dancing step and arched neck, passed the stand, a roar of applause went up; for the boy on his back was in scarlet and black. It was the first time the familiar Beechlands colors had been seen on a metropolitan track that summer, and the crowd welcomed it as Jeffries's vindication.

Constance, listening to that burst of cheering, clutched his arm.

They're off! A blur of dust, even through the glasses, far down at the end of the straightaway. Then, at the front of the on-sweeping haze, a flash of color. Scarlet and black! The Beechlands entry leads.

But there are six furlongs to go. Can he hold the pace? *Will* he? Those who know the temperamental qualities of the Bonny Bells blood doubt it.

The track is lightning-fast. He is challenged by colts and fillies that have been touted for weeks as certain winners.

Jeffries stands motionless, his field-glasses riveted to his eyes, his mouth compressed.

The chestnut holds his lead. He shakes off every contender, one after another. He flashes under the wire.

"Sleighbells wins!" The cry goes up from stand and rails. "Sleighbells! Sleighbells!"

In heart and speed and courage and determination, the colt has proved himself a race-horse, a worthy successor to Hamburg Belle, and L'Allouette, and Butterflies, and Ogden, and Man-o'-War.

The crowd rocks with excitement, but there is a mist over Constance's blue eyes. She is thinking of another chestnut—an old rogue, but also a race-horse—limping out his days in a Kentucky pasture.

Then she joins in the buzz of congratulation about Jeffries.

The great day is over, and they drive home in the sunset. It is harvest time, and in the fields they pass are corn-shocks and piled-up yellow pumpkins. They cross the Queensboro Bridge. New York looms ahead of them in the twilight. They go on to gather up life's sheaves together.

THE END

HOW MANY MURDERERS HAVE BEEN SET FREE BY CLEVER LAWYERS?

JOHN DASCOME, premier of criminal lawyers, is accused of the murder of his wife. The prosecution proves that the relations of the pair were acrimonious, that the husband inherited $10,000,000 by her death. But so masterly was his handling of his defense through counsel that the first jury disagreed. When he conducted his case in person, the second jury declared him not guilty. But in the opinion of his own friends, even of the judge who presided at the trial, he had killed his wife. His knowledge of legal procedure was so superior to that of the prosecution that his defense withstood all assaults. That was their belief. Was John Dascome guilty? Is it possible for a great criminal lawyer, even when he himself is accused, to thwart justice? It is this curiously fascinating problem that arouses interest in

The Double House

By ELIZABETH DEJEANS

which begins in

January Everybody's ***Out December 15***

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Strain

The Men Who Only Give Commands Know Little of the Strain That Is Endured by Those Who Must Do the Work of the World—as This Unusual Story Shows

By Albert Richard Wetjen

A STRONG wind blew over the sand dunes from seaward and crisped the dull water of the bay. Right across the gap through the dunes, where the sea entered, the breakers roared white and high. When each broke a chaos of foam spread into the bay and drifted well-nigh to the wharves of the little port on the farther shore. The sky was dull and cloudy. The sun came out at rare intervals and then disappeared. Occasionally a slight drizzle whisked down wind and then ceased. Beyond the white breakers came the muffled cry of a whistling buoy.

Dotted here and there over the bay, like great unshapely cakes, sand banks lifted their smooth sides from the swirl of the outgoing tide. A tiny ferry wended a snorting way across the water. A small barkantine was anchored between two wet sand banks, a lean, rusty gray barkantine. The canvas hung in bights from her foremast yards. The main and mizzen canvas was heaped up on the midship and after deck. Her foredeck was a clutter of cargo. Desolate she looked in the rain.

Along the rickety pile-built wharves of the town lay three ships. Two were steam schooners, built of steel, loading lumber for coastal ports. The officers of these small vessels were busy at work with the seamen, loading slings, driving winches, unrecognizable to a stranger as officers.

The third ship was of wood. Her squat hull had been painted so often, layer over layer, that the plank edges could hardly be seen. Her two masts were stumpy and thick. It was apparent, from the two metal hoops that remained at their trucks, that they had been built to carry topmasts, built for the strain of canvas and crisscrossed rigging. Now they were bare, save for derrick falls. Instead of canvas steam turned a screw and drove her.

Her bridge was midships, unlike those on the schooners, which were aft; a long, flat bridge. The foredeck was enormously deep below the iron bulwarks. Cargo cluttered it. Many hatches broke it up. The fo'c's'le-head, whereunder the small crew existed, was very tiny, as though the builders had begrudged the space for the seamen to live in. New paint, shining and bright, covered the ship's age. It saved her from the desolate appearance of the anchored barkantine.

A few coastal passengers, men and women, lounged over the for'ard bridge rail and watched the men busy in the holds below. The winches rattled monotonously, mingling with the winches from the schooners and the noise of the elements. The cargo waiting on the ancient wharf was lifted, sling-load by sling-load, into the ship's gaping stomach. Men swore as they worked.

The predominating thing was noise. Men shouted. The ship's officers, who could be distinguished by their uniform suits and gold braid, did not work with the seamen. They superintended as officers should. Because their ship had been remodeled from a pure freighter to accommodate

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passengers, it was felt that the officers must always look their part.

Up the nearly level gangway the agent for the company owning the ship pushed his way. He was a tall man, dressed in tweeds. He looked neat and prosperous. His face was thin, so were his lips. In his right hand he carried a packet of papers. With his left he thrust aside seamen and passengers as he made for the bridge. He found the captain in his room laboriously writing a letter. He entered without knocking, arrogantly. Bitter lines creased his face from nose to mouth corners.

"CAPTAIN," he said sharply, "you'll have to move to wharf three right away."

The captain laid down his pen deliberately and swung round in his swivel chair.

"Good morning, Mr. Agent. Sit down," he said. He waved to the faded red settee that stood against the bulkhead near the door.

"Haven't time!" The agent's voice was irritable. "Right away, captain," he repeated.

The captain grunted. He was a stout man with a face like a full moon. His complexion was a deep red, a dusky red, a red it had taken the sun and wind many years to produce. The captain's eye was small and somewhat dull. His mouth was big-lipped and protruding. His shoulders were vast, seeming to tighten the threadbare serge jacket he wore. His hair was sparse and gray; his red neck showed vividly clear and crisscrossed with clefts against the fringe of white bristles that ran beneath his coat collar. His voice was deep and even, somewhat husky, but with a hint of unbelievable power.

"Sit down," he repeated, then grumbled: "I never knew a time in this port that I didn't have to shift ship about every other day."

"That's not my fault," the agent shrilled. "I have to get you loaded with all speed. I have to cut cost. It's cheaper to move ship than to move cargo from one wharf to another."

"Eh, I suppose." The captain sighed and frowned. His face went a little redder. "For the sake of five dollars owners'll do anything. They seem to think a ship's like a motor truck to be taken anywhere at any time."

"Well, what about it?" the agent's reedy voice persisted. He snarled a little. "I can't help that. You've got to move. What you got to kick about, anyway? You ain't doing nothing."

The captain's face set. "Oh, no!" he admitted. "I never do anything. Soft life, I've got. Two hundred a month and no work. Easy life. . . . I wish some of you fellers'd take a ship over this bar, f'r instance. No work. Oh, no! Seems simple, don't it, t' stand on the bridge and give orders? Oh, yes!"

"Well," shrilled the agent, "there's plenty of captains who'd be only too glad of your job. If you want to quit, just say so."

"That's so." The captain sighed. "But I've a wife and children. . . . When do I have to move?"

"Right away. The sooner the better. Don't think you can wait. I want the ship moved now."

"And I suppose after I've moved I'll have to move back, eh, same as usual?"

"I don't know. What if you do? Am I the agent or are you? It's up to me to get the cargo aboard. I get the blame if it isn't all aboard. What's it to you—heh?—so long as you get paid and fed?"

"All right. But I'm the one who gets blamed for slow voyages and injuries to my ship. Have you thought it's low tide now? How do I know there's water enough to shift? You know these sand banks are always changing. Have you thought of this blasted wind blowing from seaward, and the tide sweeping out? . . . You fellers always come at the worst time to move a ship."

"You'll do as you're told, captain, or I'll report you to the owners. I want the ship moved now. Why, wharf three is only a hundred yards down. I'm not asking you to cross the bay."

"Oh, no!" The captain rose wearily from his chair and put his uniform cap on his head. He sighed. It was so useless to make a landsman see the difficulties. And it was true that many master mariners were out of work. Any of them would be glad of a job. Preceding the captain, the agent went out on deck.

THE captain ascended to the tiny navigation bridge and crossing to the brass speaking tube to the engineroom

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whistled down. The engineer on watch answered.

"How soon can you give me steam?" asked the captain. The engineer grew profane. He wanted to know what was the matter with several things.

"I've got to move ship," the captain explained wearily. "The agent's here stewing about——"

"That's right, blame it on me," whined the agent, who had followed the captain on to the bridge. "I'll send in a report to the owners. Just wait."

The captain growled, "Oh, shut up!" as he jammed back the plug in the tube mouthpiece.

He leaned over the bridge rail and bawled down to the foredeck.

"Mr. Leach!"

The mate looked up. He was standing by the combing of number three hatch and intently watching to see that none of the stevedores below broached the incoming cargo. "Sir?" he shouted back.

The captain cupped his hands round his mouth, for the derricks were rattling fearsomely.

"Swing those booms inboard. We've got to move ship!"

The mate shouted, "Again? G'damn!" and then turned away and shouted to his seamen for'ard. The captain called a steward from the bridge deck below.

"Get hold of the second mate," he said.

"He's ashore," said the steward.

"Where's the third mate?"

"He's ashore too, sir."

"Confound! Can't they stay aboard five minutes in port? That's the worst of young officers when you're carrying women passengers. . . . All right, steward, that'll do. . . . See here, Mr. Agent, the sort of jam you run me into? I haven't an officer aboard saving the mate."

The agent sneered. He shrilled triumphantly: "Well, you ought to have. What do you let them go ashore for? The ship's got to be moved and that's all there is to it."

The captain turned deliberately. His eyes blazed.

"See here, Mr. Agent. When my officers are at sea they stand their watch, four-on and eight-off. And they do their duty. When they're in port they stand the same watches. Do you expect them to be with the damned ship night and day? Keep your mouth shut or I'll kick you ashore. My mates are off watch and they've every right to go ashore unless I tell 'em not to."

The agent exploded. He waved his fists aloft. "Keep my mouth shut? Confound you, captain! Don't you talk to me like that. I'll report——"

"Oh, shut up!" the captain said wearily, and turned away. His hands gripped tight the bridge rail before him. Often he had a hard job at control. Many were the times he would be willing to give a month's pay to hit a ship's agent or owner for stupid pig-headedness. But he had a wife and a family. He turned after a while and faced the fuming agent.

"Would you mind going below while we shift ship?" he inquired with elaborate politeness.

The agent muttered, but went down.

The captain grunted, muttered an oath and then crossed to where the siren lanyard hung alongside the little closed-in chart house. He jerked angrily on the cord and the siren boomed, drowning all other noise and echoing back and forth across the bay. If either the second or the third mate was in hearing he would return to the ship at that signal.

The mate came on the bridge swearing profusely. He had left the bos'n on the foredeck below to see to the derricks. The rattle of the winches was now less frequent as the great booms were swung inboard and their guys drawn taut.

"What's the big idea?" the mate inquired.

The captain jammed his hands into his pockets and shook his head.

"Search me," he said. "But you know what it is in this blamed port. We always move about twice a day. Trouble is, the agent hasn't enough savvy to gather all cargo on one wharf before we arrive. Pah! Makes me sick."

"Where we going, sir?"

"Wharf three."

"Guess the second and third are ashore too, eh?"

"So the steward said."

"Why the devil couldn't that agent have let us know last night?" the mate grumbled.

ONE of the loading steam schooners lay ahead of the ship, between her and wharf three. Had the schooner not been

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there it would have been merely a matter of pulling the ship along to the desired wharf by means of hawsers attached to the shore bollards and shifted ahead as the ship hauled up on them. But with the schooner in the way the ship would have to cast free from the wharf entirely and steam round the schooner. Then she would have to haul in to number three wharf and make fast.

At high tide and in normal weather the maneuver would not have presented much difficulty. But with low tide and in a bay where the water depths varied and no sand bank was stationary, the task was one full of anxiety. Also the wind blew ever stronger from seaward, and the outrunning tide created a rip that sagged heavily at anything afloat that left the shelter of the wharf.

"Stand by," rang the captain on the brass telegraphs to the engineroom. The answering jangle came back. The captain leaned over the bridge and shouted down to the mate who was on the fo'c's'le-head with the port watch.

"Man at the wheel!"

The mate lifted his hand to show that he had heard.

"Man at the wheel," he said to the bos'n.

"Man at the wheel," repeated the bos'n to the three men of the watch. The men looked at each other.

"Your wheel, Shorty," said one, spitting tobacco juice overside with a swift turn of his head.

"Guess that's so," mumbled Shorty and he waddled down the ladder from the fo'c's'le-head to the foredeck and so to the bridge. When he was finally ensconced on the grating in the wheelhouse, the captain peered down at him through the open for'ard window of the chart house and through the aperture in the house floor.

"All ready?" said the captain.

"All ready, sir," Shorty assured him.

The captain grunted.

"Then put your helm midships."

"Midship helm," repeated Shorty. He turned the wheel spokes.

The captain went to the bridge rail and peered aft.

"Let go aft, Mr. Murphy! Hold her with the spring!" he shouted to the third mate, who had come aboard in response to the siren's summons and had taken the place aft that the second mate would have occupied had he been aboard.

For centuries, since the first sailors sailed the sea, it has been the custom to repeat orders. It prevents mistakes. There can be no mistakes at sea.

So Mr. Murphy shouted back, repeating the command: "Let go aft, sir! Hold her with the spring!" And, automatically checking the order in his mind, the captain mumbled "Aye, aye" as he went to the for'ard dodger and shouted to the mate.

A jangle of telegraphs, and the engine commenced pulsing like a great heart. Slowly the ship moved. The stevedores on the wharf gaped as though they had never seen a ship move before. A few loafers spat tobacco juice into the bay from where they sat on the piles, and registered interest. Three men ran from bollard to bollard and threw off hawsers as the ship's officers directed.

"Starboard a bit!" the captain called deeply.

Shorty sniffed as he turned the wheel. "Starboard a bit," he said. His little eyes were intent on the quadrant before him where a needle registered the movements of the rudder. He checked the wheel when the needle had gone far enough.

The ship's bow edged out from the wharf.

"Slack away for'ard!" shouted the captain. The mate repeated the order. Then he yelled to the seaman who was holding the turns of the only hawser still fast to the wharf, the breast rope, on the windlass drum.

The man "serged"; that is, let a little of the hawser slide through his hands. The steam hissed as the drum, relieved momentarily of the strain, clanked round a turn or two. The carpenter, at the throttle, shut off the steam altogether and the drum stopped. The seaman slacked still further, watching the mate.

THE wire spring, the only rope now out astern, began to slacken as the after end of the ship came in and rubbed along the wharf. Slowly the bows cleared the stern of the schooner ahead, whose captain leaned over his bridge rail, watching.

The telegraphs jangled again. The engines stopped.

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"Slack away aft!" called the captain. He was handicapped by being on the bridge by himself. When he had all officers on board the third mate was supposed to stand by the telegraphs and repeat orders to the helmsman. That made it unnecessary for the captain to run all over the bridge and enabled him to give his fixed attention to plotting his next move.

As it was he peered first for'ard, gauging distances, anxiously eyeing the rip of the outgoing tide, watching the nearing sand bank on his port bow. Again he paced aft and peered to see his ship's stern was not being chafed too much against the wharf piling. He measured the force of the wind, trying to estimate just how much it would start the ship drifting. Back again he swung, fearful lest he should smash into the stern of the steam schooner and incur a damage suit. He was worried about the water. Was there enough to float his ship? The tide was still falling.

"Let go for'ard!" he shouted, suddenly.

The mate yelled the order to the seaman at the windlass. The man hastily flung off two of the three turns of hawser he had round the drum. Another seaman as hastily flung clear several bights of the hawser from the great coil against the ship's rail. When there was only one turn on the drum the seaman lay back on the rope and let it run quickly through his fingers till all strain was gone and the great hawser sagged to the deck of the fo'c's'le-head and again to the water beyond the ship. Then the seaman flung off the last turn and stood clear while the hawser slicked out through the fair-leads, slower and slower, and finally ceased moving.

"Let go ashore!" yelled the mate, standing on the fair-leads and holding to the rail with one hand.

The three stevedores casting off lines from the bollards waved and raced for the eye of the slack hawser. They heaved up on it and slipped it clear. It fell with a tremendous splash into the dull swirling waters.

"Pick up yer slack!" yelled the mate, twisting his head to the windlass.

The two seamen handling the hawser jumped for the thick rope and lifting it took a couple of turns round the windlass drum as the bos'n, coiling up a heaving line, repeated the order.

"Let 'er buck, chips!" called one of the seamen to the carpenter.

That worthy turned the throttle and the windlass clanked and raced, the drum rolled around and the hawser came dripping up through the fair-leads, slimy with bay mud. One seaman took it hand-over-hand off the racing drum. The other seaman coiled it profanely on top of the coils that had not been used so far and were dry.

"All gone for'ard, sir!" called the mate, stepping back on to the deck from the fair-leads and facing the bridge.

"Aye, aye," responded the captain. Hastily he faced aft. The ship was now moving away and ahead from the wharf at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Anxiously the captain eyed the swirling water overside. His face was drawn with the tension of responsibility. How fast was the water coming?

"Let go aft!" he shouted suddenly.

The third mate echoed the order.

The seaman holding on the double wire spring round the starboard winch drum "serged," or slacked, away. The wire kinked behind him and the third mate himself cleared it. The telegraphs jangled on the bridge, "Half ahead." The engine started beating like a great heart again. The ship moved.

HER bow was now well past the stern of the steam schooner. On the wharf the three stevedores stood by the after bollard and waited for the wire to slack so that they could throw the bight clear. The after winch rattled. The wire had jammed, one turn over another and the third mate was trying to clear it by backing up with the drum. It was bad wire, old and cheap. It kinked very easily. The delay allowed the ship to get ahead of the slack. The wire tautened, sang.

The third mate swore viciously. The seaman holding the slack end of the wire grew nervous. In some way the turns were twisted so that they would not clear readily.

"Hold on!" the officer shouted hastily to the bridge. The captain spun on his heel to see what was the matter. He jumped for the telegraph.

Whang! went the wire as it parted. It broke between ship and wharf. It curled back like a vicious snake, smashed against

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the poop rail. A great kink caught in the fair-leads. The third mate reversed the winch desperately to see if now the wire had gone he could not snatch it inboard and clear the twisted turns. He didn't know the kink was in the fair-leads. The winch drum strained. There was another whang! The wire between the winch and the rail broke. The frayed end curled over, like a spring, and smashed the seaman at the drum across the chest. He went over backwards with a cry. He rolled on the deck and moaned. Blood came from his mouth. The third mate sprang to him, shutting off the winch steam.

"All gone aft, sir!" he shouted, white-faced as he bent down.

The captain, aware that something had happened, faced the bows. He desperately wanted to see what was wrong aft. He knew whatever it was he could straighten it out with a few cool orders. The third mate was a youngster, not used to handling a watch when shifting ship. Lines appeared on the captain's brow. He grew uneasy. But he daren't pay too much attention astern. His ship was swinging free in the river. A steam schooner crowded her on the starboard beam, a sand bank on the port. Scarcely two hundred feet wide was the channel. The fate of thousands of dollars' worth of property, perhaps lives, his own job, hung between his lips.

Oh, what *was* the water depth? And how fast was the tide running? Was it fast enough to affect the ship? And the wind? Why couldn't the fool agent have waited?

The tide rips caught the ship as she swung clear of the steam schooner. She started to swing rapidly, bow on to the sand bank.

"Hard a-port!" shouted the captain. Shorty at the wheel repeated the command quite unperturbed. It wouldn't matter to *him*, even if the ship should sink.

"Full ahead!" rang the telegraphs. Came their answering jangle. The captain ran to the starboard side of the bridge and eyed the steam schooner. Would his stern clear?

On the fo'c's'le-head the mate anxiously watched the nearing sand bank.

The ship still swung, the engines being slow to take up power. Her stern grazed the stern of the steam schooner. But the steam schooner's captain already had a man holding a cork fender overside at the point of contact. There was a shuddering rasp. Came the point of strain for the stout man on the bridge.

"Blankety - blankety - blankety - blank-blank!" yelled the steam schooner captain. "Get that barge of yours away from my ship!"

An old bay seaman shouted from the wharf, "Look out for shoal water, skipper."

"Ten fathoms' clearance yet, sir!" called the mate from the cat-heads for'ard. He was speaking of the sand bank.

"My God, get a doctor!" the third mate was crying hysterically, from aft.

THE captain's jaw tightened. The little muscles stood out near his ears. He thrust his hands in his side pockets and kept his gaze fixed rigidly ahead. His eyes wore a bleak, cold look. He seemed to be listening for a message that came from far away. His head was inclined slightly to the wind. Watching him then you could understand why he was one of the most reliable sailors on that wild coast.

It was a matter of chance and moments whether the ship would answer her helm before she hit the sand bank. Or she might ground in the very channel. If she had not enough power to breast the rips at all she might sweep far out into the bay.

"Ease the helm!" said the captain at last, suddenly, evenly. The helm was beginning to answer. Scarce six fathoms, thirty-six feet, separated the bow from the edge of the bank.

Shorty in the wheelhouse spat calmly. "Ease the helm," he said. Looking aft for a brief moment the captain saw a group of men carrying an inert form toward the saloon. He noted that the third mate had had sense enough not to leave his post.

There was a hoarse whistle on the port beam. The captain twisted abruptly and saw a little ferryboat breasting the rips and crowding for the scant channel between the ship's bow and the sand bank. The ferry whistled again. Like a nervous woman screaming, the captain thought grimly. He took no notice.

The ferry captain shouted frantically. The few passengers on the little craft's upper deck shouted. Again the whistle screamed. The captain stared ahead and

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said nothing. His ship was swinging clear. To the other captain his own vessel.

The mate on the fo'c's'le-head sighed as the sand bank started to recede. "Close," he mumbled.

"Good heavens!" said the tall agent on the lower bridge, sneeringly watching all things. "The captain is the most careless man I ever saw. Takes a lot of time to shift a small ship a hundred yards."

"Good man, Cap'n Roscoe," commented the old bay sailor who had shouted from the wharf about shoal water. "Notice he knows what he's doing?"

"You're all right now," sang out the captain of the steam schooner. Good-naturedly he waved his hand. "Water's pretty shallow just off my beam, though."

The captain on the ship's bridge merely nodded and lifted a hand in greeting. It seemed neither man remembered the language the one had used not five minutes previously.

The ferry shot under the ship's bows, still screaming with her whistle. Her passengers had quit shouting, there being nothing now to shout for. For a minute they had expected to get caught between the ship and the sand bank. Strain had overwhelmed them.

Said the mate, a little testily, "Bos'n, get a line ready to send ashore."

"Aye, aye, sir," called the bos'n and he stopped and bent a heaving line on to the spliced eye of a great eight-inch hawser.

"Port a bit more," said the captain evenly. Shorty mumbled the order, for he was taking a fresh chew of tobacco, and spun the wheel with one hand.

ON THE wharf the second mate, just arrived from up-town, stood and anxiously watched proceedings. He wondered whether he would get called down by the captain for not being on hand to shift ship. He noticed a broken wire dangling from the after fair-leads and swore. He supposed some other man had taken his place and made a mess of things. He was alternately sulky and apprehensive.

Parallel now with the steam schooner the ship slid. Her speed was very slow because of the rips. The wind caught her and veered her dangerously close to the schooner's side. The captain spoke to the helmsman, the wheel turned quickly, the error was corrected.

There was a slight bump and the ship went still slower, threatening to stop. The captain peered to port and starboard. The screw threshed evenly. Mud and slime boiled on the surface. A foul smell tainted the air.

"Stop," rang the telegraphs. The captain shouted for'ard:

"Take a cast, Mr. Leach!"

"Aye, aye, sir," said the mate and spoke to the bos'n, who took the matter in hand personally and swung the sounding lead. The depth was shouted.

"Ought to make it," the captain muttered. "Full astern," jangled the telegraphs. The ship moved back, jerkily. Shorty was kept busy at the wheel holding the bow straight against rips and the wind.

"Full ahead," went the telegraphs. The ship jerked forward. She struck the mud once more, hesitated a bit and then plowed slowly on. Her keel furrowed several inches in the bay floor. But the obstruction was only a narrow ridge. And the ship was half over already. Deep water was but a fathom or so away. So the lead said and the lead never lied.

"Get a line ashore, Mr. Leach!" called the captain, for now the ship was past the steam schooner, over the ridge of mud and sand.

"Line ashore, sir," shouted back the mate and he spoke to bos'n who was coiling away the hand lead. The bos'n spoke to a seaman and the man picked up a heaving line and waited.

"Port a bit," said the captain, and Shorty, in the wheelhouse below, responded. The ship's bow swung slightly toward wharf number three.

The three stevedores who had shifted the lines on the other wharf waited the incoming ship. The marooned second mate waited. The old bay seaman watched with critical eyes how the ship was handled.

"Get a line ashore aft!" shouted the captain.

"Line ashore aft, sir," the third mate acknowledged. He picked up a heaving line himself and coiled it. He wondered as he did so how the injured seaman was getting on.

The seaman on the fo'c's'le-head cast his

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line. It fell short. He coiled it in, hand-over-hand, and cast again. One of the stevedores on the wharf put his foot hastily on the "monkey's knot" on the end before it could slip back into the water. It was hauled ashore. The eye of the hawser followed.

THE third mate cast from aft and another stevedore caught his line. Another hawser was hauled ashore.

"Starboard a bit," said the captain. "Starboard a bit," said Shorty as he spun the wheel. The ship straightened out. She was parallel with the wharf, her stern about five fathoms from the steam schooner's bow. The tide rips eased up as slack water approached. The wind could do only good now, blowing the ship on to her berth.

"Slow," rang the engineroom telegraphs under the captain's hand.

"Good work!" muttered the old bay seaman on the wharf.

"My God, he's slow!" grumbled the tweed-clad agent on the lower bridge, impatiently fingering his watch chain.

"Take in your slack!" called the captain, first for'ard and then aft. Twice the repeated call came to him. He nodded and walked across the bridge to look at the wharf.

"Some fenders midships, Mr. Leach," he called.

The mate waved his hand. He spoke to the bos'n, who spoke to a seaman. The man hurried below, under the fo'c's'le-head, and appeared after a while staggering under three cork fenders. These he tied by their lanyards to the rail midships so that the actual fender ball hung well down the ship's side and would ward off direct impact with the nearing wharf.

"Vast heaving for'ard!" said the captain.

"Vast heaving," replied the mate. He held up his hand and the seaman holding the rope on the windlass drum "serged" a little but still kept the strain.

"Heave away aft!" the captain shouted.

The third mate repeated and quickened the speed of the winch drum so that the hawser came in faster. The ship had been slipping off the parallel again. Now she straightened out once more as the after hawser slicked in.

"Heave away for'ard!" said the captain. The mate called back and the windlass resumed its clanking hiss.

"Stop," rang the telegraphs. The answering jangle mingled with the captain's shout, "Get a spring out aft!"

"Get a spring out, sir!" responded the third mate. Leaving a seaman to haul away on the hawser he took one man and uncoiled another wire from a reel, snaking it along the deck ready for running. Another heaving line was brought and attached to the bight of the wire.

"Easy," the mate for'ard said to his men. The windlass turned slower. The ship was well-nigh on the wharf.

"Slow astern," went the engineroom telegraphs, for the ship was sliding ahead too much.

"Shift your line for'ard a bit!" roared the captain to the third mate.

The third mate shouted to the stevedores on the wharf and then snapped a command back at the winch crew. The hawser was "serged," drooped, slacked right off and the stevedores on the wharf lifted the bight from the bollard it was on and carried it farther for'ard.

"Stop," rang the telegraphs noisily. Then, "Finished with engines."

"Make fast fore and aft!" shouted the captain.

"Make fast, sir," the mate and the third called back. A wire spring was got out for'ard. Another hawser served as a breast rope. Two more ropes went out aft. After a while, "All fast, sir," came from aft. "All fast, sir," came from for'ard.

"SWING the derricks out, Mr. Leach," said the captain, leaning over the bridge rail.

"Aye, aye, sir. Swing the derricks out," said the mate.

"Get the gangway overside, Mr. Murphy," called the captain to the young officer aft.

"The gangway? Aye, aye, sir," returned the third mate. He finished taking turns with the hawsers round the bitts. He watched a seaman wrap a seizing round double wire where it was on the bitts near the mainmast, and then he took two men to where the gangway rested on number three hatch.

The captain grunted, took his hands from his side pockets and filled his pipe.

Everybody's Magazine, December, 1923

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As he struck a match and lit it he paused by the chart house.

"That'll do the wheel," he called to the helmsman. Shorty grunted, spat tobacco juice aside and looked up.

"That'll do the wheel, sir," he said. Mechanically he put his helm amidships, swinging the spokes till the brass needle of the quadrant ran straight for'ard and aft. Then he stepped off the grating and made his way for'ard.

The derrick booms swung overside. Guys were slackened and tautened. Stevedores swarmed aboard. The captain came down from the navigation bridge and made his way to his room. He flung himself into a chair and sighed.

"Damn fool," he said at last to the inkwell. Then he removed his uniform cap and laid it on his desk. He took up his pen and went on writing his unfinished letter.

"SAY, captain, d'you know it's taken you nearly an hour to shift? My Gawd, you're slow! You forget about docking dues and all that I——"

"Oh, yes!" said the captain wearily as he laid down his pen and looked up into the agent's sour face. "I suppose I did take a long time. There were many things to be considered. But I wish you'd leave me to run my own ship in my own way."

"Telegram, sir," said the steward, pushing contemptuously by the agent.

"Thanks." The captain took the telegram. "And by the way, steward!" The white-jacketed steward paused.

"Yes, sir?" he said.

The captain frowned. "Was anyone hurt aft when that wire broke?"

"No, sir. A sailor got a crack in the chest but the doctor says he'll be all right in a day or so."

"I see. Ah, you might send the third mate to me."

"The third mate? Yes, sir. At once, sir." The steward pushed past the agent again and vanished. The captain slit open the telegram and scanned the message. His eyes twinkled. He even laughed a little.

"I'll report this to the owners," nagged the agent, waving his hand in the air. "I suppose there'll be a damage suit for scraping that blasted schooner's stern. Why don't you be more careful? I can't understand——"

"Oh, shut up!" growled the captain, looking up, his smile disappearing. "Shut up, for heaven's sake! Do you think I scrape other ships on purpose? I told you it was awkward to handle a craft right now. I did my best and the ship's safe. Go away and leave me in peace."

"That's all right to talk. What about the time you took? I tell you Jack Esmer of the *Wallaby* shifted his ship in half an hour last Wednesday."

The captain rose to his feet.

"Maybe," he said. "I happen to know he shifted at high tide and on a fine day. Now don't you stand there and try to tell me my business. I've spent thirty years at sea learning it. See this wire?"

He held out the telegram.

"It says," went on the captain, "that I've got five thousand dollars coming to me as salvage money on the towing of the *Nonet* to safety last year. It's just been awarded. The case has been in the courts for twelve months. Now do you know what five thousand dollars means to me?"

"No. Can't say I do. Anyway——"

"Shut up!" roared the captain. "I'll tell you what it means! It means that I can be independent of scum like you! It means that I can smash you on the nose, get fired and still laugh, see? Well, take it!"

His great fist swung viciously up and the agent sat down on the deck outside the cabin with remarkable suddenness.

"Oh!" he gurgled. "Oh!"

"And if you want any more, stand up," grunted the captain. Then he went inside his cabin and slammed the door shut.

"What's the matter?" asked the third mate of the groaning tweed-clad figure as he came by a few minutes later.

But the agent did not answer. He only glared. The third mate grinned as he knocked on the door of the captain's cabin. A deep voice bade him enter. The agent rose to his feet and tottered away.

"This way, sir," said the mate grimly, seizing the dazed agent's elbow and guiding him to the head of the gangway. The mate had seen the captain's blow from where he had stood on the main deck. He gave the agent a slight push to start him down the shallow steps. "Good day, sir." Then he went to tell the engineers about it and for a long time the messroom echoed with chuckles.

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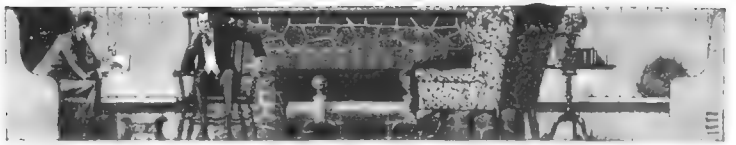

Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

READERS of EVERYBODY'S will come to know the name Michael Arlen very well in the next year. There is a story in this issue by him, "The Broken Nose" (page 49), and others will follow. As a critic says of him: "Arlen is one of the phenomena of our time. You may or may not like phenomena. But anyway, you probably like an original story, so in Michael Arlen's case you can compromise on that.

He himself [the critic continues] does not compromise on anything, though he did once say that "discretion is the better part of literature." Since then, however, his novel "Piracy," in which half London society have a chance to see themselves, has run into many editions; the other half are no doubt wondering what he will say next. Arlen is twenty-five years old; and though no human eye has ever seen him at work, he has written four successful books. The first, which he published at the age of twenty, was his memoirs and confessions, for he thought he would be done with them at the beginning. Many people thought that the book, "The London Venture," was by George Moore under a pseudonym; some papers stated the fact with authority, while Michael Arlen contented himself by murmuring that the rumor that he was George Moore was slightly exaggerated. Since then he has been more frequently compared to Guy de Maupassant. His latest book of stories is called "These Charming People," and the public have found them entirely charming. What the charming people themselves think is another matter, but not relevant.

One critic has called him "the romantic comedian of our time," while another has said of him: "He concerns himself with people who are bored to death unless they are in some sort of mischief. The ladies carry their frailty as the gentlemen carry their drink—like gentlemen." And he has written that "a gentleman is a man who is never *unintentionally* rude to any one."

T. S. STRIBLING, whose "The Return of Sledger" (page 85) is a feature of this number, is the son of a country newspaper editor; he seems to have taken to writing because he never thought of doing anything else. To the Chimney Corner circle he says:

There was never a time in my life when I was not a scribbler either incipient or chronic. Bred in me, I suppose. When I was very young, I used to spend my summers in Alabama on a farm with my aunt. In my desk I still have a diary I kept up there when I was six. Certainly there is nothing very distinctive about this stage of my development, except the fact that even in that long-gone thenness, it seemed to me the getting of events down into my diary was almost of as much importance as the events themselves. This incipient feeling of the importance of impaling life on paper, as I have intimated above, became acute and now is chronic.

IT IS impossible, according to Mr. Stribling, for him to go anywhere, see or feel anything without beginning to revolve in his head the fictional possibilities of such material. He continues:

I was in New York dining with a woman friend who had just succeeded in coddling a new magazine through the colicky and unrewarding period of its infancy. She was describing the difficulties she had encountered. In the midst of her recital I cried out, "Oh, what a shame that you are not going to do anything with it!"

She stared in amazement. "Not do anything with it—it's paying dividends now!"

"I meant," I explained, "you have lived through this interesting life, the very stuff novels are made of, and you will let it all pass and be lost."

She laughed and said: "That's your bent as a fiction-maker cropping out. Surely the value of life is in the living."

BUT is the value of life in the living? Mr. Stribling feels that the value of life is not in the living, or at least not exactly as his friend meant it. He explains:

M. Freud has pointed out that we retain all of our experiences subconsciously, and M. Bergson

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Michael Arlen, author of "The Broken Nose" (page 49), at twenty-five already has four successful books to his credit.

has demonstrated that the duration of time comes from a rolling up of the past, an impinging of the past with the present on the future. Without this carrying forward of the past, time itself would fall apart into a series of disconnected moments such as must be the experience of a stick or stone. Now in the establishment of a magazine, the past is certainly rolled up and is utilized in the present, but it is a sort of speechless concentration, highly suggestive but not self-explanatory as is a piece of fiction. In short, it seems to me when a writer utilizes life as the material of fiction, he is storing up the past in a conscious luminous form instead of a subconscious and opaque form. And it is this fact which gives me a feeling of the vital and tremendous importance of the art which I remotely follow.

Until any matter has found its expression in pictures or in words, it can never function in the general consciousness of our race. It is, as I suggested to my friend, a loss. And it is a profound loss, too, because it is the very wisdom, art and emotion distilled by so much life. If the value of life is in the living, surely the value of living must be in the thoughts and emotions that have risen up about the process of living. Nobody would claim that the value of food is in the swallowing and the digestion. Now if thought and emotion be the final goal, certainly a method to preserve these must be of inestimable value. One such method is fiction.

THAT Ruth Burr Sanborn, author of "The Trail of the Chitigau" (page 137), has had adventures, even though simple ones, everybody will be prepared to admit. She writes:

When I consider the exploits of other people, I am amazed always at the simplicity of my own adventures. I confess that I have never been round the world in twenty-four hours; I confess that I have never coasted down the Alps nor walked up the steppes of Russia. The best that I can claim for myself is to have lived in seventeen different houses in ten different towns, and to have had five different professions in five years.

First, I taught, fifty pupils to a class, six classes to a day, hours eight to five-thirty, with no time for lunch. I did newspaper reporting in a place where French was the principal language spoken. I do not speak French, but I can count in any tongue the six mahogany clocks that go with a wedding. I did advertising—in a factory town where there was a cubic foot of gossip to every square inch of sidewalk, and two means of entertainment, the "show" and the "other show." And I edited—I still do, in fact, for half of every day. In the other half of the day I write.

The fact that I am writing at all is partly luck, and partly because I like it better than anything else, and partly because in the process of getting an A. M. I went to Radcliffe and took Professor Copeland's famous course. Copey, you know, can inspire anybody, and one of his young men, who held conferences with him, saved my life—literally speaking. And having thus been rescued, I hope that I may continue to a ripe old age.

T. S. Stribling ("The Return of Sledger," page 85), son of a country newspaper editor, kept a diary at six, and has been writing ever since.

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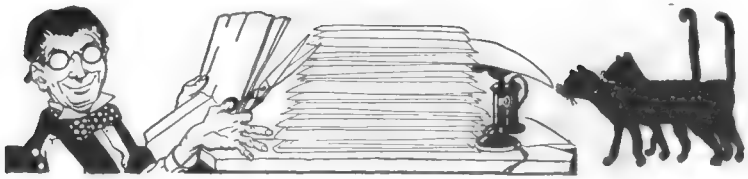

Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

At subpostal station in Chicago: "*Please count your change before leaving the window, as errors will not be corrected after you have done so.*"
On Chicago West Side Boulevard: "*Autos will slow down to a walk.*"
Lake Zurich, Ill., pavilion:. "*Dancing Ten Cents* (10c) *a Couple; Ladies Free.*"
In New York negro beauty-parlor: "*We do permanent waving.*"
On Long Island: "*For Sale, Pekingese Pups. May be seen by appointment.*"
At church supper in Iowa: "*Coffee, Cake, and Tea, or Tea Cakes and Coffee.*"
On Monroe Street, Chicago: "*Fresh Apple Cider straight from the cows and chickens.*"
On restaurant in Butler, Mo.: "*Don't Divorce Your Wife Because She Can't Cook. Eat Here and Keep Her for a Pet.*"
In Fowler, Ind.: "*W. H. McNeely. Dealer in Coal, Cream, Eggs & All Kinds of Junk.*"
Electric Sign in Chicago: "*Cornell Glee Club, Orchestra Hall—Dec. 22—Bromo Seltzer for Headache—next Day.*"
Chinese laundryman in Seattle: "*Wa Shing.*"
In window of Cleveland restaurant: "*Stop Chicken. Dinner only 50 Cents.*"
In Erie, Penn.: "*Otto B. Schott.*"
In Waterloo, Ky.: "*Mr. Fountain Wetmore Rainwater.*"

(*London Free Press*)

Found, in street car, bone-headed man's umbrella. London Street Railway Co.

That's one way to keep any one from claiming it.

(*Nevada Representative*)

The beautiful rendition of several numbers by Mrs. Ingalls of Nevada was well worth the admission fee, which was purposely made small.

It's something, these days, to get your money's worth.

(*Directions accompanying new feeding bottle for infants*)

"When the baby is done drinking it must be unscrewed and laid in a cool place under the hydrant. If the baby does not thrive on fresh milk it should be boiled." (A. M. S., GLASGOW)

Sometimes it's a case of pa boiling.

(*Cedar Rapids Gazette*)

Born, to Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Storck, 712 West Fourth Street, February 13, a son.

And since it was Friday, too, he just flew 'round home that day.

(*Kendall County News*)

The little 4-year-old boy of Hans Matheson who was so badly bruised between the wheel and wagon box is getting along nicely.

Usually a fatal spot.

(*Fisher, Ky., Items*)

Harry Ratliff is able to be out again.

Harry Ratliff was a caller at Foster, Saturday.

John Ratliff was a caller on Leslie West Saturday night.

Harry Ratliff was a caller on Leslie Moorehead Sunday morning.

Boy, lock that door, quick, and pull all the shades down.

(*Hartford Times*)

Correct these sentences:

"You go to the picnic, mother," said the flapper, "and I'll stay at home and do the housework."

"Let's not go to the dance," said the girl, "it's so much nicer to sit at home and read aloud to one another."

"I really enjoy preserving," said the wife, "and I don't mind the heat in the least."

"It isn't that I dread the pain, but I simply haven't time to go to the dentist."

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(*Hartford Times*)

WANTED—Good, plain cook, willing to go to country for summer.—MRS. JOHN R. COOK, 135 Oxford St. Tel. 4—0097.

Taking diamonds to Johannesburg.

(*Steeleville Ledger*)

Owing to a big rush of job printing and for lack of space a number of births and deaths will be postponed until next week.

Thank goodness, now we'll have more time to decide what we'll name it.

(*Chicago Journal of Commerce*)

Norfolk, Va.—A radio message received here today says that the destroyer *Farquhar* was rammed by a battleship off Panama to-day while in battle practise and is being convoyed to port in a singing condition.

Submitted by W. R. B. "for your funny column in the back end." (Funny place for one's funny column.)

(*Butte Post*)

NOTICE TO PUBLIC.

I, Kwan Hop Tuck Tong, purchaser of Quong Tuck Wing Grocery store, 18 West Mercury Street, will not be responsible for any debts or obligations incurred by my predecessor, Quong Tuck Wing.

(Signed) KWAN HOP TUCK TONG.

"Dies like a dog, Mah Jong!" he said.

(*Washington, N. J., Star*)

St. Cloud Theater
To-night and To-morrow
"Deserted at the Alter"

"Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds," as King Lear whispered to Lady Macbeth.

(*Wisconsin weekly*)

The Red Cross concert given last night by sixteen of our beautiful young ladies was highly appreciated. They sang in a charming manner, winning the plaudits of the audience, who pronounced them the finest group of short horns in the county. A few of them were rich brown in color, but the majority were spotted red and white. Several of the heifers are fine bodied, tight-limbed animals and promise to prove good property.

Boy, bring me the time-tables, quick!

(*Santa Ana News*)

G. J. Parmer, 23 Richelieu Hotel, reported to the police that his watch was stolen last night. Inspector Smithwick is working on the case.

(MRS. V. C. S.)

Removing the monogram?

(*Ads. in Toronto Telegram*)

Embroidered Wash Skirts $3.95. Some with succotash braid in perpendicular or circular stripes, etc.

(MRS. J. C. M.)

I prefer mine on the cob.

(*Hiawatha World*)

The Rev. Ezekial Hammil preached a sermon against poker playing to a full house Sunday night.

And everybody ante'd when the collection was taken up.

(*Albany Journal*)

Keeping all food under cover is the first step toward ridding the house of aunts.

(MRS. M. P. S.)

Gee! Here's where I get rid of Aunt Mary.

(*Texas weekly*)

DIED—Abraham Cattrom, aged 56 years, 6 months and 13 days. Deceased was a mild-mannered pirate with a mouth full of tobacco. He came to this town in the night with another man's wife, and joined the church, and you could hear him pray for six blocks and see him spit for four. He owes several dollars for subscription for this paper, besides meat bills, etc., all over town. He died singing, "Jesus Paid It All," and we think he was right—for he never paid anything.

Cattrom? I thought his name was Legion.

(*Los Angeles Examiner*)

"Daugherty To Aid Union Suit."

(MISS D. B.)

Ah! But will he give his support to B. V. D.?

(*Majestic Theatre, Haverhill, Mass.*)

"Closed for Repairs. Will re-Open in A gust."

(J. J. J.)

With a breezy play, probably.

(*Oshkosh Northwestern*)

WANTED TO BUY—Flat-bottom boat or small scow; also office furniture, table, desk and chairs.

(W. J. C.)

Will need a mermaid stenog. next.

(*Mt. Tabor Items*)

Mrs. C. A. Leasure and children Everett, Arthur and Thoburn spent Sunday with the former's mother, Mrs. Luvenia Thompson.

Emma Leasure and sons Clyde and Edward, of Berne, spent Friday with the former's sister, Naomi Ball.

Lizzie and Cora Curtis spent Sunday afternoon at H. C. Leasure's.

Where just nobody works but father.

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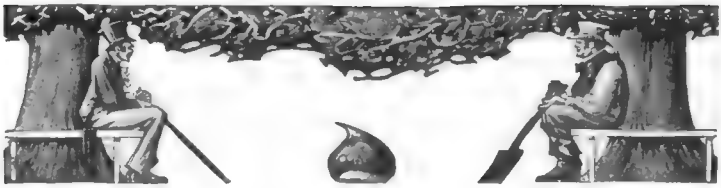

Everybody's Chestnut Tree

Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

DOWN in the Ozark country where slow thinking is a tradition with the natives, Jed Pollock held the reputation of being the slowest-witted mortal in the world. One night a neighbor dropped into Jed's farmhouse and informed him that he had just come upon a bear making a meal of one of Jed's cows. Jed seated himself on the kitchen doorstep and proceeded to think the matter over. At last he called to one of his lengthy sons:

"Bud," he said, "ye'd better go take a look at that thar cow an' ef she's hurt very bad ye'd better shoot her."

A CART containing a number of negro field hands was being drawn by a mule. The driver, a darky of twenty, was endeavoring to induce the mule to increase its speed, when suddenly the animal let fly with its heels and dealt him such a kick on the head that he was stretched on the ground in a twinkling. He lay rubbing his woolly pate where the mule had kicked him.

"Is he hurt?" asked a stranger anxiously of an old negro who had jumped from the conveyance and was standing over the prostrate driver.

"No, boss," was the old darky's reply, "dat mule will prob'ly walk kind o' tendah for a day or two, but he ain't hurt."

KITTY: Come in and see our new baby.

TEACHER: Thank you; but I will wait until your mother is better.

KITTY: You needn't be afraid. It's not catching.

"THAT cut was caused by her ring, your Honor. She struck me in the face with her clenched fist," complained the young husband.

"Where did she get the ring?" questioned the magistrate.

"I gave it to her. It was our engagement-ring."

"The prisoner is discharged. That is clearly a case of contributory negligence," returned the judge.

"WHY, Ellen, this is the fourth time I've had to tell you about the finger-bowls. Didn't the last lady you worked for have them on the table?"

"No, ma'am; her friends always washed their hands before they came."

THOMAS JEFFERSON JACKSON, a large colored gentleman, was being tried for assault and battery upon his wife Irene. The judge asked him to state his case.

"Jedge, Ah's a hard-workin' man, Ah is. T'other day Ah comes home all tired from mah work. Ah looks round fo' mah wife and don' see her, so Ah goes upstairs an' dere she is prinking herse'f befo' a mirrow. 'Irene,' Ah says, 'where is mah meals?' 'Go on, man,' she says. 'Ah ain't got no time for you, Ah's a member ob a lodge now.' Jedge, dis made me sore and Ah asked her again fo' my victuals and she said, 'Ah done tol' you once Ah ain't got no time to bodder wid you, Ah belongs to de Ladies Artillery ob de Cullud Eagles.' Jedge, Ah got so mad dat Ah picked her right up and threw her out de window and said, 'If you's a eagle, den fly.'"

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FIVE-YEAR-OLD Ann was often taken to call with her mother. One day while on a walk down-town they passed a beautiful church and the mother, wishing to see the interior, took her inside. They stayed but a few minutes, and when they went out Ann said:

"Whose house was that, mother?"

"That was God's house," she was told.

That night she was telling her daddy all the details of her trip. "And daddy, we went to call on God, but he wasn't home."

AUNT RACHEL, the old colored servant, had returned from her first automobile ride.

"Well, Aunt Rachel, how did you enjoy your ride?"

"Fine, Boss, them cars, they sho is wonderful things!"

"Want to go again sometime?"

"Naw, suh, one time's enough for me. I didn't dare to let my whole weight out all the time I was in the thing."

THE stranger was asking a lot of questions about the village, and the oldest inhabitant was doing his best to answer him.

"And how about the water supply? What precautions do you take against infection?"

"Well, first of all, we boils it, zur."

"Good."

"And then we distils it."

"Fine. And then?"

"And then, zur, we drinks moonshine."

ONE day a struggling artist received fifty dollars. He ran to show it to his wife, yelling, "Hurrah!"

"What's the matter, Jack? Did you win a prize at the exhibition?"

"No, no," replied the novice, joyfully. "The picture was lost on the train and the railroad company sent me the value!"

NOT so long ago a bunch of gunmen started a reign of terror in a certain Texas town, and the terror-stricken mayor wired frantically to the governor for Texas Rangers to restore peace. A special train came down from the capital and one lonely Ranger stepped out.

"Where's the rest of the outfit?" demanded the mayor and sheriff.

"Rest, hell," replied the Ranger mildly. "You ain't got but one riot, have you?"

A SMALL boy strolled into an Arizona drug-store and said, "Gimme a nickel's worth of assafetity." The proprietor wrapped it up and passed it over.

"Charge it," said the boy.

"What name?" inquired the druggist.

"Hunnyfunkle," was the answer.

"Take it for nothin'," retorted the languid chemist. "I wouldn't write 'asafœtida' and 'Hunnyfunkle' both for no nickel."

MOTHER (assuming her best before-company manner): Oh, precious lamb! Hasn't mother told you that you must not bite your fingernails!

PRECIOUS LAMB: I'm not, mother. I'm just getting the dirt out.

WITH the thermometer near zero one early morning last winter, a Chicago man who directs the operation of a score of newsboys considered it a good idea to give the boys some food to help them combat the cold. So he invited them all into a restaurant.

"Now order what you want," he told them, "so you'll be able to keep warm when you go out on the street."

And every mother's son of them ordered ice cream.

THE old gentleman was lost in a London fog, so thick that he could scarcely see his hand before his face. He became seriously alarmed when he found himself in a slimy alley. Then he heard footsteps approaching.

"Where am I going?" he asked anxiously.

A voice replied weirdly from the darkness: "Into the river. I've just come out."

BROTHER JOHNSON had labored through a long, perspiring evening to convince his colored congregation of the dreadful fate of those who remained unsaved.

He concluded, "And the wicked shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Old Sam Jackson rose from his seat, demanding: "What about me, Mr. Johnson? I ain't got no teeth."

Leaning far over the pulpit and shaking a long, bony forefinger at the aged sinner, Brother Johnson said tensely: "Never you mind, Mr. Jackson! Never you mind! *Teeth will be provided!*"

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A Boy and His "Ad"

SITUATIONS WANTED.
STRONG BOY, orphan, 17 years old, ambi-
tious, no experience, willing to do any-
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WILL your boy be in a fix like this a few years from now—just when he should be going to college or a vocational training school?

The "Want Ads" of the newspapers tell many a heart-breaking story of mere children thrown into the terrific competition of the working world, without training, without equipment.

Look through the "Help Wanted" columns in the newspapers and read advertisement after advertisement beginning "Expert", "Competent", "Educated", and then ending up with either "big pay" or "high salary for the right man".

* * * * *

You do not want your child to take a back seat in life. You do want him to be a leader in his chosen line.

Just about *one* family in *three* can afford to enter their boy in high school and only *one* family in *fifty* can see him clear through college.

Now what are you doing to make it possible for your boys *and girls* to get a good education? How are you going to have the money ready when you must have it—in 15 or 10 years, or sooner? Colleges and all kinds of schools cost money.

* * * * *

Then why not do these essential things and do them now?

1st—Find how much it will cost to give your children the kind of higher education you want them to have.

2nd—If you have the money now, put it aside.

3rd—If you haven't the money, figure out a way of saving for your Education Fund.

4th—Begin now—this week—to lay aside the first small installment.

The mere fact that his father and mother are making a sacrifice for him, is likely to inspire any red-blooded boy to *make good* and get ready for his big opportunity. The pride of knowing that your children are to have their chance will more than pay you for what you do. Plan now—carry out your plan.

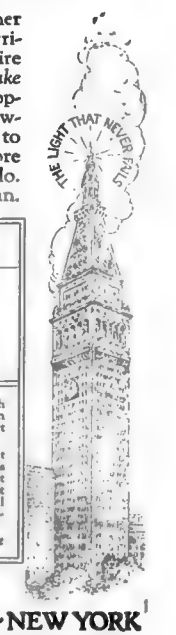
Here is the significant story of the children who enter the 5th grade of the public schools of the United States. Only 63 of each 100 graduate from grammar school—13 from high school—and 2 from college, according to Bulletin No. 34 of the U. S. Bureau of Education.

By giving your children the kind of training they need, you will make them happier, more successful men and women, and your country will be the richer for your contribution of better citizens.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company will arrange, if you like, to supply your boy (or girl) with funds needed, in case of your untimely death—or if you live, for that matter. If interested in this phase of the question, write for booklet describing our Educational Fund policy.

But in any event begin now to prepare for what you must do *in case you live*. Statistical records prove that of the parents who read this page most of them will live for fifteen years or more, but failing to make early and proper preparation will be unable to carry out their present good intentions as to educating their children.

HALEY FISKE, *President*



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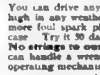

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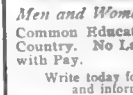

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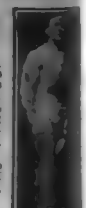

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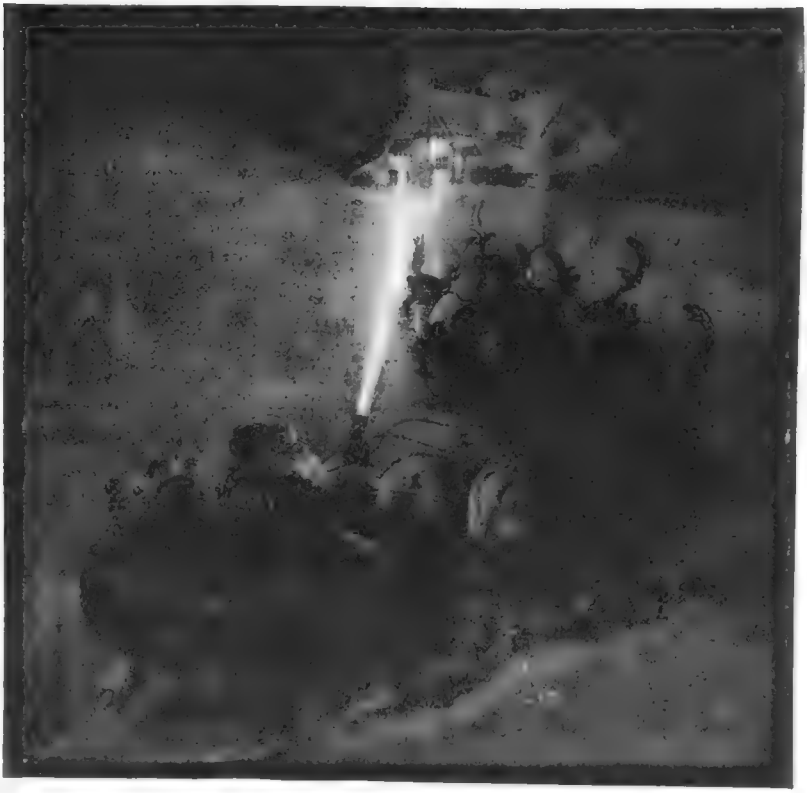

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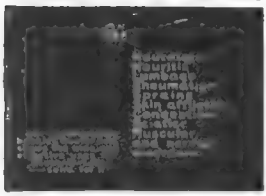

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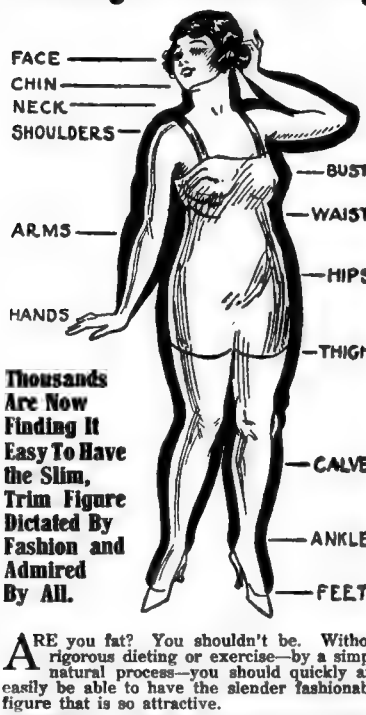

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"When I wrote for your Rid-O-Fat sample I weighed 245 pounds. To-day, which is 30 days later, I weighed only 204 pounds. A reduction of 41 pounds in a month. I am delighted. Please send me another 30-day treatment, as I want to reduce to 145 pounds, which is the correct weight for my height. I am sure that I will realise my ambition with Rid-O-Fat and I feel better than I have in years."

Lost Twenty Pounds In Three Weeks

"According to weight tables I weighed exactly 20 pounds too much. Rid-O-Fat reduced me to normal in just a little more than three weeks. I feel better, don't get tired, and my friends say I look like a new person."

Generous Sample FREE

I want every fat person to have a chance to try Rid-O-Fat in their own homes at my expense. I don't want them to take my word or that of the thousands who have used it. I want them to see for themselves that the results are more pleasing than anything I can say. To introduce Rid-O-Fat in a million more homes I will send a free sample to anyone who will write for it. In fact it is really more than a sample, as it is sufficient to reduce the average person several pounds. I will also send with the sample an interesting booklet that explains the scientific reason for fat, and why Rid-O-Fat meets with the highest approval.

Costs Nothing! Don't send a penny—I will send the sample and the booklet under plain wrapper and fully postpaid. This does not obligate you in any way and is never to cost you a cent. It is simply a limited offer I am making to more generally introduce Rid-O-Fat.

This free offer is good for only a short time, so send me your name and address on the coupon below or a post card, and I will see that the generous sample and booklet are mailed immediately under plain wrapper postpaid. Do not try to get Rid-O-Fat at drug stores as it is distributed only direct from my laboratory to you—remember this is a short time offer and send your name at once. H. C. HAIST, Whinton Laboratories, 1518 Coca Cola Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

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Without obligation in any way and with the understanding it is not to cost me a cent at any time, please send me your generous free sample of Rid-O-Fat and free booklet under plain wrapper.

Name .....

Address .....

Feel Young—Look Young

There is nothing which adds to a person's age so much as fat. A few extra pounds makes any man or woman look from five to ten years older. Not only that, the excess weight and increased heart action saps vitality and energy.

Once the gland which controls your fat is functioning properly your food should be turned into firm, solid flesh and muscle. As your weight comes down to normal you should experience a delightful and amazing improvement in your appearance. You should not only feel and look younger—you should actually be younger. You should also be in better health—a real health of energy—not the fictitious and deceiving health of fat that insurance companies say shortens the life ten years.

Complexion, health and figure are improved at the same time. The result is new vitality, magnetism and personal charm that makes for success. Tasks once hard become easy and life worth while.

ARE you fat? You shouldn't be. Without rigorous dieting or exercise—by a simple natural process—you should quickly and easily be able to have the slender fashionable figure that is so attractive.

Scientists have discovered that excess fat is often caused by the subnormal action of a small gland. Once this gland is healthy and functioning properly, your weight should reduce naturally and without effort on your part, to the normal amount for your height.

And science has discovered a simple extract which tends to regulate the gland that controls fat. Without lifting a hand in unnecessary and violent exercise, you should find it a delightfully simple matter to have the ideal, slender figure admired by everyone.

The wonderful thing about the scientific formula known as Rid-O-Fat is that in losing your superfluous fat you should gain added vigor, health and energy of mind and body.

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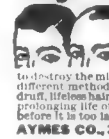

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